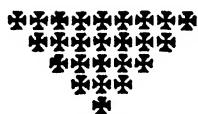


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# **SAINT PATRICK:**

## **HIS LIFE AND MISSION**



**MRS. THOMAS CONCANNON**  
**M.A., D.LITT.**

Ταιριζεανη αν τ-αξιοδηρ αν ιεαθηρ γεο  
τον Δημο-Τιγεαρηα

Σεορατή, Σάιρουνεαλ Πασ Ρυατύηη, Δημ Θαρβος  
Δημ Μάας,

Σομπληθα πασιόν ράνηδαις, θρηιόν-ζεληνηρεαγλαιρε πα ηέιρεανη;  
Δγυρ τά ρύηιλ αισε γο ηγλαεραιό ρέ αν ταθηταιρ  
νεαγ γεο δ'η α λάιηη δηρ ρον ολανη θίληρ ράνηδαις παομέτα,  
ι πθαιλε Δγυρ, γεέιη.

Τά υόδηρ αισε, παρη αν γεέανηα, γο ιεαγραιό ρέ αν  
Ιαθηόγ γεο δηρ ηατζ ράνηδαις ειλε  
.1. ράνηδαις, Σάιρουνεαλ Ο Τομηναιη, ατά Δγ γειτεαό  
ιειρ αν αιρ-έιηζε, γεηρέ παομέτα Δημ Μάας,  
έηη α πόη-ξηδαι αγυρ α πόη-ξεαη α έηη,  
η-ηηηη τον έαραιο ηα θίληρ  
αγυρ ηα ιοηόλαιηη ηά ηιαδη αισε αηιατή.

*To His Eminence,  
Joseph, Cardinal MacRory, Archbishop of Armagh,  
Co-Arb of St. Patrick in the Primacy of the Irish Church,  
I offer this book,  
And through him  
To the Faithful Children of St. Patrick both in Ireland  
and beyond the Seas;  
And I would fain have him lay it  
As a tribute of the Author's undying gratitude and affection  
On the Grave of Another Patrick  
Who, in the Sacred Soil of Armagh, awaits the  
Resurrection:  
Patrick, Cardinal O'Donnell.*

## PROTESTATION

In obedience to the Decree of Pope Urban VIII,  
the Author protests that, unless where it is  
expressly stated that the Church or the Holy  
See has recognised the truth of miracles, or  
other supernatural manifestations referred to  
in the following pages, no credence is claimed  
for them beyond what the available historical  
evidence may warrant.

*Nihil obstat:*

J. B. O'CONNELL,

*Censor Theol. Deput.*

*Imprimi potest:*

✠ EDUARDUS,

*Archiep. Dublinen.,*

*Hiberniae Primas.*

*Dublini, die 25 Martii, anno 1931.*

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[ A.M.D.G. ]

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## INTRODUCTION.

### THE " SOURCES " OF ST. PATRICK'S STORY.

BEFORE beginning to relate the story of Saint Patrick it is well for us to understand clearly how that story has been preserved for us. Here, fortunately, we find a subject as full of human and romantic, as of scholarly interest, so that the discussion of "sources," which usually proves so forbidding to the general reader (however fascinating to the expert) is likely, in the present case, to be considered not the least appealing chapter in the whole narrative, of which it is the obligatory prelude.

These "sources" are the Saint's own writings (the *Confession* and the *Epistle against Coroticus*) and a number of ancient *Lives*, dating from the seventh to the eleventh century. It will be convenient to study them under the following heads : I.—The Patrician Documents in the *Book of Armagh*; II.—The *Vitae*, published by the great Franciscan hagiographer, Father John Colgan, in his *Trias Thaumaturga*; III.—Other Sources.

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### I.—THE BOOK OF ARMAGH.

Among the treasures salvaged from the wreck of Ireland's ancient civilisation, there is none more precious than a small square volume of vellum preserved in Trinity College, Dublin. More precious even than the *Book of Kells* is that volume to many an Irish heart, for to it we owe, in greatest part, our most authoritative knowledge about St. Patrick.

If its guardian will turn over the pages for us, he will probably point out that the first leaf is missing, and that in the body of the book there are wanting four other leaves. With these exceptions the book is exactly as it left the scribe's hands eleven and a quarter centuries ago—to be quite exact in A.D. 807.

Who was that scribe? The trained eye of the great Eugene O'Curry first discovered his signature when the precious volume had passed into the keeping of the Royal Irish Academy in the forties of the last century. At four different places in the book he was able to make out the partly erased words : "Pro Ferdomnacho ores" ("Pray for Ferdomnach"). O'Curry pointed out his discovery to the Rev. Dr. Graves; and the two scholars, after a further examination of the book, found another "subscription" written in pseudo-Greek uncials which Dr. Graves thus reconstructed : "Ferdomn]ach hunc Libru]m . . . e dictante . . . b]ach herede Patricii scripsit." The writer, therefore, worked under the direction of an "heir (or comharb) of

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Patrick," that is a Primate of Armagh, whose name, apparently a dissyllable, ended in " ach." The next thing was to examine the Irish Annals. These proved the existence of two scribes called Ferdomnach, one of whom died in 727, the other in 845. But the only " heir of Patrick," whose name suits the indication of the subscription thus partially restored is Torbach, whose primacy began and ended in 807. It follows, therefore, that the MS. was written by the younger Ferdomnach, and that he finished writing the First Gospel in that year—on the Feast (as another entry in the same column tells us) of St. Matthew. And thus, with singular exactness, Dr. Graves arrived at the 21st September, 807, as the date of these entries.

The *Book of Armagh*, then, was written (or at least was begun) by the scribe Ferdomnach, at the instigation of Primate Torbach in 807.

Its history, especially during the thousand and forty-seven years that lie between its completion and its reaching its present location in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, is more interesting than many a novel. Owing to the belief that it had been, in part at least, written by St. Patrick himself<sup>1</sup> it became, under the title of *Canoin Patraicc*, the object of the greatest reverence. A " King of Ireland's Son," in the person of Prince Donnchad, son of Flann, had a jewelled case made for it in 937. Sixty-five years later (A.D. 1002) the great Brian "of the Tributes," on

<sup>1</sup> This was due to a misreading of a line in it: "hucusque volumen quod Patricius manu conscripsit sua."

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his royal progress "righthand wise" around Eire, had his "soul-friend" Maelsuthain record on the *verso* of one of its folia his acceptance on behalf of the kings of Cashel, of the supremacy of Armagh. A little later we find the possession of the *Canoin Patraicc*, and the *Baculus Jesu*—the celebrated Crozier of our Apostle—recognised as synonymous with the legal *comharbship* of Patrick. This is referred to in St. Bernard's *Life of St. Malachy*. Having related how St. Malachy compelled Niall to retire from Armagh, he tells us that the latter took with him in his flight the two objects which were regarded as the very title-deeds of the See, and by virtue of their possession was enabled to return and after two years resume his station.

In consideration of the great reverence of the Irish people for the *Canoin Patraicc*, it became customary to administer solemn oaths on it; and at this stage of its career we find it entrusted to the hereditary keeping of a family which took its name from the office, Maor na Canoine (Steward of the Canons) and many members of which appear in documents, as MacMoyre. The "keepership" was no empty honour, for it carried with it an endowment of eight townlands in the Barony of the Upper Fews (where the name of the parish, Ballymoyre, still survives). These lands remained in the possession of the Mac Moyres until the Plantation of Ulster, when the "eight townlands" passed into the grabbing hands of one George Fairfax, and the town house

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of the Mac Moyres in Armagh became the property of Lord Caulfield.

Even then, however, the Mac Moyres retained possession of the *Canoin Patraicc*—and it was only in 1681 that it passed from their custody in the tragic circumstances now to be related.

At that time the “Keeper” of the Canon was a certain Florence Mac Moyre, who, in addition to his keepership of the precious volume, also appears to have exercised the profession of schoolmaster. We learn this fact alas ! from the records of the trial of Blessed Oliver Plunket ; for the unfortunate Florence MacMoyre, beguiled by the infamous Hetherington, agent of the Earl of Shaftesbury, appeared as one of the Crown witnesses against our martyred Primate at the Court of King’s Bench, London, in June, 1681.

Whatever motive induced this heir of an ancient race to such action, it was, it appears, not money. For in order to raise funds for the journey to London he was obliged to pawn the sacred *Canoin Patraicc*, of which he was keeper, for five pounds, and he was never able to redeem it.

And thus the precious volume passed from the family which had, from generation to generation, exercised the guardianship of it, and the last of the MacMoyres sank, in poverty and desolation, into a dishonoured grave.

For a few decades the book, whose *fata* we are recounting, passed from view. We next hear of it in 1707, when Humphrey Lloyd “listed it ” among the Irish MSS. in the possession of Arthur Brownlow of Lurgan. With the

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Brownlows it remained for six generations, until Rev. Francis Brownlow in 1846 deposited it in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy for the purpose of making it easily accessible to scholars and antiquarians.

In 1853 the *Book of Armagh* was exhibited for sale at the Dublin Exhibition. It was purchased by Rev. Dr. Reeves for £300, and a little later passed from his ownership, for the same sum, to that of Lord John George Beresford, the Protestant Primate. By the latter it was presented to Trinity College (1854); and there it still remains, though placed at the disposition of Dr. Reeves until his death in 1892.

Even when it was still in the custody of the Mac Moyres scholars had interested themselves in the contents of the book. The earliest writer we can trace as deriving his material directly from it is Jocelin, a monk of Furness Abbey, who, transferred to that of Down, wrote a celebrated *Life of St. Patrick* in connection with the ceremony of the "Translation" of the Relics of SS. Patrick, Brigid and Columba in 1186.

His opportunity to examine the precious volume came when de Courcy in his predatory career in Ulster, took prisoner the Primate, Thomas O'Connor, and with him his *insignia* of office, *Canoin Patraicc* and the *Baculus Jesu*, objects which, however, the Norman subsequently restored to Armagh when he set the Primate at liberty.

The next historical writers who drew materials from the *Book of Armagh* belong to the 17th

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century, and include the Protestant Primate, James Ussher, and Sir James Ware. The former consulted it for his *Religion of the Ancient Irish* (1631), and his *Primordia* (1639), and it is to these works that Colgan owes his knowledge of it. Sir James Ware collated this MS. for his edition of the *Confession of St. Patrick* in his *S. Patricio adscripta Opuscula* (1656).

In the nineteenth century, while yet in the possession of the Brownlows, it was used by Sir William Betham for his *Irish Antiquarian Researches* (1827) and consulted by Dr. Petrie, Mr. Monck Mason, and Dr. O'Donovan, Eugene O'Curry and Rev. Dr. Graves.<sup>2</sup> To the two last we owe the important discovery of the date and writer of the MS., which has been already recorded—and to Dr. Graves a valuable memoir on the subject.

For many years the Right Rev. Dr. Reeves, to whom we owe the fine *editio princeps* of Adamnan's *Vita S. Columbae*, was occupied with the project of an *editio diplomatica* of the *Book of Armagh*; but his death in 1892 left the project still unaccomplished.

Its accomplishment was destined for Rev. John Gwynn, D.D., D.C.L., Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Dublin, who, in 1913, brought out, under the auspices of the Royal Irish Academy, his superb edition of the famous book which Scribe Ferdomnach had

<sup>2</sup> It is to be regretted that Dr. Lanigan had not an opportunity of consulting it for his *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland* (1822); nor Villaneuva, the Spanish Jesuit, for his edition of the *Works of S. Patrick* (Dublin, 1835).

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written for Primate Torbach more than eleven centuries ago !

Patrician scholars, however, have not awaited the publication of this great work before making use of the MS. Thus, Dr. Todd used it largely for his *Life of St. Patrick* (1864) ; and Dr. Bury had the advantage of consulting it while his colleague, Dr. Gwynn, was preparing it for publication, and he himself was engaged on his own fine *St. Patrick: His Place in History* (1905).

A very notable date in the history of Patrician studies is 1882, when our great Irish scholar Fr. Edmund Hogan, S.J., edited for the *Analecta Bollandiana* two documents concerning our Apostle contained in the *Book of Armagh*: the *Vita S. Patricii*, by Muirchu Maccu Machtheni, and the *Collectanea* of Tirechán. For the former he collated the text in the *Book of Armagh* (hitherto the only copy of Muirchu's work known to exist) with that of another copy of Muirchu's *Vita* discovered a short time before by the Bollandists in a Brussels MS, that had originally belonged to the Irish Monastery of Würzburg. The Würzburg MS. contained portion of the text of Muirchu which had been lost from the *Book of Armagh* (by the destruction of its first page) and other chapters which Scribe Ferdomnach had been in too great a hurry to copy; and thus Father Hogan was in a position to give to the world, for the first time, a complete and accurate edition of that *Life of St. Patrick* which is the oldest formal biography of our Saint ever written.

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Another notable event in "Patrician" documentary history was the publication in 1905, by Dr. Newport White of the first critical edition of the *Latin Writings of St. Patrick*, for which he collated the text of the *Confession* in the *Book of Armagh* with that in the other five MSS. of the *Confession* that have survived the wastage of the centuries.<sup>3</sup>

Having said so much of the *Book of Armagh*, and of the scholars who have drawn from it materials for their work on St. Patrick, it is now time to say something of its contents. In addition to the "Patrician" Documents with which we are more immediately concerned, it contains a copy of the *New Testament* (Vulgate) whose importance is emphasized by Dr. Gwynn as being "the only copy of the complete New Testament transmitted to us from the ancient Irish Church" and (2) Memoirs of the Life and Acts of St. Martin of Tours—viz., the *Vita*, *Dialogi* and *Epistolae* of Sulpicius Severus.

The Patrician Documents in the *Book of Armagh* are five in number :

1.—A copy of the *Confession*, which though incomplete, is of great value as being the earliest copy of that document known to exist—two centuries at least older than any other now surviving. It would appear that the scribe of the

<sup>3</sup> The other MSS. containing the *Confession* (in whole or part) still known to survive, are the Cotton MS. Nero, E. I. in the British Museum; two MSS. in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Fell 3 & 4); a Rouen MS.; a portion of the St. Vaast MS. used by the Bollandist, Father Denis, S.J. The *Epistle* is contained in the Cottonian & Fell MSS.

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*Book of Armagh* also meant to copy the *Epistle against Coroticus*, as he heads his transcription of the *Confession* with the words *Libri Sancti Patricii*—Dr. Newport White, comparing this text with that of other MSS. of the *Confession* has noted five other very considerable lacunae, so that the most he can say for it (as regards contents) is that it contains considerably more than *half* the complete text.

2.—A *Life of St. Patrick* by Muirchu Maccu Machtheni written at the suggestion of Aedh, Bishop of Sleibte. As the obit of Bishop Aedh is given in the Annals s.a. 699, this work (claimed by its author as the earliest formal biography of its subject) must have been at least begun before that date. The few facts discovered about Muirchu have been set forth by Father Hogan. He appears to have been a bishop in the district around Blessington, where in former times the territory of the Uí Faelain “marched” with that of the “Uí Garrahon.” He had a brother called Medran who in later times was, like himself, venerated as a saint (festival, June 8, in *Felire of Oengus*). With Bishop Aedh, Muirchu took part in the Synod of A.D. 697, where Adamnan, the biographer of St. Columba, got adopted his *Lex Innocentium*. From an expression in the dedicatory preface to his work, Dr. Graves has deduced that he was a son of Cogitosus, author of a celebrated *Life of St. Brigid*.

Until the discovery in Brussels of the Würzburg Codex containing another copy of the work of Muirchu, in the “eighties” of the last

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century, that in the *Book of Armagh* was the only one known to exist.

3.—The *Breviarium* of Tirechán. This convenient description of the work of Tirechán giving an account of St. Patrick's missionary journeys and foundations in Meath, the two Teffias, Connacht, Western and Northern Ulster has been borrowed by Dr. Eoin MacNeill from an expression in the work itself, and will doubtless henceforth be universally adopted. Tirechán was a Bishop, and a student of Bishop Ultan of Ardbraccan († 657, author of a famous hymn in praise of St. Brigid). From a " Book " which he found with his master, Bishop Ultan, Tirechán copied many notes, and to these he added information he derived from other " Seniors " in Meath and elsewhere, or collected in his journeys (apparently made for the purpose of gathering material for an authoritative work on Patrician foundations, in support of the claims of Armagh to the " headship " of the Church of Ireland). Dr. MacNeill (who has submitted the works of Muirchu and Tirechán to a minute and illuminating investigation from which he has drawn very remarkable results) fixes, from autobiographical references in the *Breviarium*, the family to which Tirechán belonged as descended from Conal son of Ende, son of Amolngid, son of Fechri, who was brother of Niall of the Nine Hostages, and the homeland of the kin in the neighbourhood of Killala, west of the estuary of the Moy. The same scholar has proved that the work was written in the neighbourhood of Cruachan, and afterwards

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brought to Armagh. The only copy known to exist is that in the *Book of Armagh*. MacNeill dates it in or about 701, Gwynn and Bury to the late sixties or the seventies of the seventh century.

To the *Breviarium* of Tirechán in the *Book of Armagh* we find appended a number of *notulae* or *memoranda*. Many of these, expanded into intelligible form, are found in the *Vita Tripartita*, of which we shall presently speak, and this fact suggested to Dr. Eoin MacNeill, that the *Vita Tripartita*, in its original form, was also the work of Tirechán, and that the *notulae* were drawn up by that writer in preparation for it.

The great difficulty in accepting this most interesting theory is a psychological one. It seems strange that the scribe of the *Book of Armagh* who was in too great a hurry to copy the *Epistle against Coroticus*, who left out many passages of the *Confession*, and some chapters of Muirchu, should have gone to the trouble of copying down a number of notes that can only have been intelligible to their compiler, or to one who had the key to their meaning supplied by the *Tripartite*. If the *Tripartite* (or whatever it ought to be called in its original form) was the work of Tirechán, and therefore existed when Ferdomnach was engaged in his labours of copyist there would be no point, one imagines, in copying these mnemonic jottings. It seems much more likely

<sup>4</sup> It has been suggested that the *notulae*, which are in a minute hand, have been inserted by another scribe than that of the main portion of the *Book of Armagh*. If this be so it hardly lessens the difficulty of accepting MacNeill's

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that Ferdomnach himself compiled the *notulae*<sup>4</sup>—and afterwards expanded them into the original of the Tripartite—thus supplementing the materials he already had to hand in Muirchu, Tirechán and the other documents he had copied into the *Book of Armagh*—all of which are embodied in the *Tripartite*. However, there may be, as Dr. MacNeill suggests, linguistic difficulties in the way of accepting this conclusion, and I have no competence in this domain.

4.—Another Patrician document in the *Book of Armagh* is the *Liber Angeli*, a tractate dealing with the rights and usages of the Church of Armagh. It is to be found in no other MS.

5.—*Dicta Patricii*: In the *Book of Armagh* occur also three *Dicta* ascribed to St. Patrick—one containing a reference to his journeyings through Gaul and Italy and in the islands in the Tyrrhenian Sea, in all of which he had the fear of God for his guide; the second is a quotation from the *Epistle against Coroticus*; the third is the famous direction which identifies the Church of the “Scotti” with the Church of the “Romans,” and prescribes the adoption in the Scottic Liturgy of the *Kyrie Eleison*:

“Ecclesia Scottorum, immo Romanorum, ut Christiani ita ut Romani sitis, ut decantetur vobiscum oportet, omni hora orationis vox illa laudabilis Cyrie lesson, Christe lesson. Omnis

identification of Tirechán as the author of the *notulae*, and of the original of the *Tripartite*. Why should any ninth century compiler copy the *notulae*, if their contents were already available in expanded and intelligible form?

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ecclesia quae sequitur me cantet Cyrie lession,  
Christi lession, Deo Gratias."

In addition to the documents already noticed the *Book of Armagh* contains some additional notices : one deals with the foundation of the Church of Trim ; then come notices of grants to Patrick in Connacht and Leinster, some in Latin with Irish forms, others in Irish interspersed with Latin.

Having thus related the history of the *Book of Armagh*, and recorded its contents, it only remains to emphasise that, containing as it does, a copy of the *Confession* earlier by at least two centuries than any other we possess, the sole copy of Tirechán and the additional notes thereto, the sole copy of the *Liber Angeli* and the *Dicta Patricii*, and the sole copy of Muirchu's *Life of St. Patrick* known before 1882 (when the Würzburg copy was discovered in Brussels and used by Father Edmond Hogan), this ancient volume, compiled by scribe Ferdomnach for Primate Torbach eleven and a quarter centuries ago, is one of the "chief jewels" of the Irish Race.

## II.—THE "VITAE S. PATRICII" IN THE "TRIAS THAUMATURGA."

In the year 1647 the great Franciscan hagiographer, Father John Colgan, published at Louvain a collection of ancient *Lives* of "the three wonder-working Saints of Ireland," Patrick, Brigid and Columcille—whom he called

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*Trias Thaumaturga.* The story of the compilation is in its own way as interesting as that of the *Book of Armagh*, eight hundred and forty years older.

Ever since the foundation of St. Antony's, Louvain—or at least since Father Hugh Ward had made it the bright centre of Irish historical and hagiographical studies which gave its name immortality—a band of eager workers burning with zeal “for the glory of God and the honour of Eire” had been carrying out in it the most marvellous work in the collection of materials for the History and Hagiography of Ireland. Extraneous circumstances added to their zeal. The first was the example of Father Heribert Roseveyde, S.J., who, in the last years of the sixteenth century, had laid the foundations of the great work of the Bollandists, which he began in an unostentatious way when he spent his vacation and leisure time in exploring the libraries of Hainault and French Flanders and copying the old texts he found there, dealing with the lives of the saints or Church History. What Heribert Roseveyde and his followers did for other saints, Hugh Ward and his company determined in a particular way to do for the saints of Ireland.

The second incentive was the publication by Dempster (the Scottish “hagiokleptes,” or “saint-stealer,” as he has been called) of his *Menelogium Sanctorum Scotorum* wherein, ignoring the historic signification of the name *Scotia*, he had boldly stolen for his native Caledonia all the saints who were known in

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history as Scotti. This brazen robbery "set the Irish upon the recovery of their historical property"; it excited Father Hugh Ward (appointed Guardian of St. Antony's, Louvain, in 1623), "to set in motion the intellectual machinery represented by Father Patrick Fleming, Brother Michael O' Cleary, and Father John Colgan, and produced the undying memorials of Irish industry, the *Annals of the Four Masters*, Fleming's *Collectanea Sacra*, and Father John Colgan's *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*, and *Trias Thaumaturga*."

Years were spent in the collection of materials for these great works. In 1623 Father Patrick Fleming, passing through Paris, on his journey from Louvain to Rome with Father Hugh Mac Caghwell, met in the French capital, Father Hugh Ward, and found him, together with all the Irish in that city, very indignant at Dempster's "Hagiokleptomania," and very much interested in Father Messingham's forthcoming *Florilegium Insulae Sanctorum*. Ward (whom Father Brendan Jennings has recently discovered to have been descended from the O'Clerys through his mother, and therefore doubly "a chronicler by birth," with the historic "virus" in his blood from both sides of the house) finding the young Palesman, Father Fleming, as interested as himself in Irish history and hagiography, got him to promise that in every monastery he might visit on his way to Rome, he would make diligent enquiries if there were any documents bearing on the saints of Ireland, and, if possible, get copies of them.

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A series of letters from Fleming to Ward still exist showing us how eagerly the younger man entered into the spirit of the enterprise Ward was then planning, and telling of his "finds" in various monasteries, where he and Mac Caghwell had received hospitality. Even in Rome, though busily engaged in preparing for his public defence of his doctorate thesis, he did not forget the Irish saints, and he keeps an eager ear open when he hears of treasures in cardinalitial libraries. On his return journey to Louvain he kept up the search, and Wadding, speaking later of Fleming's devotion to our saints, informs us that "he visited the principal libraries of Italy, France, Belgium and Germany in search of documents bearing on them."

A little before Fleming's return to Louvain, Father Hugh Ward (who had, in the meantime, been appointed Guardian of St. Antony's) dispatched his learned cousin Brother Michael O'Clery, "a chronicler by descent and profession," to Ireland on a similar quest: "to collect and bring to one place all the books of authority in which he could discover anything that related to the holiness of her saints with their pedigrees and genealogies."

This is not the place to speak of Brother Michael's ten years of toilsome search and labour in Ireland, and of the mighty fruit of the collaboration of the "Four Masters." But we must emphasise the fact that when he returned to Louvain after the completion of the *Annals of Donegal* in 1636, he returned laden with treasures.

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Alas ! he returned to find many of those who had planned the gallant enterprise dead : Father Patrick Fleming had died for his Lord at the hands of Lutheran fanatics near Prague in 1631. Father Hugh Ward had been snatched off by death in 1635 ; Brother Michael himself seems to have died about 1644.

And now no one was left but Father John Colgan, but to aid him in the gigantic task Father Luke Wadding sent Father Brendan O'Connor, a scholarly young Leinsterman, from St. Isidore's, Rome, to Louvain, and with his aid Colgan set about preparing for the press the materials for the first volume of *The Lives of the Irish Saints*. When the War of the Confederation broke out Father Brendan O'Connor was dispatched to Ireland, where we find him in close contact with Rory O'More—and making provision with him for a due place for Irish studies in the free Catholic Ireland, for which O'More and his gallant comrades were in arms.

It was when the hopes of that free Catholic Ireland emerging from the war were still bright, that the first volume of the *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* (those for January, February and March) appeared at Louvain, in the very year when Rinuccini's vessel, "San Pietro," with "wine from the Royal Pope" sailed into Kenmare Bay (1645).

It was found that for certain of our saints, particularly the three great Patron saints of the Irish race, there was such a wealth of material that it was considered better to publish their *Lives* in

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a separate volume. This was the genesis of the second of the works issued by Colgan usually called the *Trias Thaumaturga*. It was dedicated to the Franciscan Archbishop of Dublin—Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Fleming (uncle of Father Patrick Fleming) and bears date, 1647. This precious volume contains five ancient *Lives* of St. Columcille and six of St. Brigid. But we are more nearly concerned with the seven *Lives* of St. Patrick, which, collected by Fleming, Father Stephen White, S.J., Brother Michael O'Clery and others, in their researches in continental libraries, and in what remained of Irish libraries, were thus saved for posterity.

As we turn over the pages of the *Trias Thaumaturga*, it is borne in on us how great the difficulties against which Colgan had to contend, and how churlish some contemporary scholars must have been about sharing their " finds " with him. The most striking proof of this is his failure to get a copy of the *Confession of St. Patrick*, and the *Epistle against Coroticus*, though he knew<sup>5</sup> of the existence of the St. Vaast MS. containing the *Confession* and the *Epistle* (which Father Andreas Denis, S.J., was to edit ten years after Colgan's death for the Bollandists) and had learned of the existence of the *Canoin Patraicc* both from Jocelin's reference to it, and from Ussher and Ware who had, in his own time, made use of it. And so the works of Tirechán and Muirchu were unknown to him.

<sup>5</sup> *Trias Thau.* p. 214. He had found it listed in *Elenchus Codicum Belgii*, by Anthonius Sanderus.

## INTRODUCTION

In contrast with the churlishness of the scholars who denied him access to these important documents stands out brilliantly the fraternal charity of the great Jesuit hagiographer, Father Stephen White. To him Father Colgan expresses his profound obligations, and among the *Vitae S. Patricii* published in the *Trias*, that numbered *Vita Tertia* was copied for Colgan by Father Stephen White in the Library of the Monastery of Biburg in Bavaria.

For the most part, however, he had to rely on the results of the research of his own brethren, and printed sources. Thus what he numbers as the *Vita Prima* (the hymn beginning "Genair Patraicc in Nemthur," usually called *The Hymn of Fiacc*) was a "find" of Brother Michael O'Clery, who had brought back with him from his ten years treasure hunting in Ireland, the *Liber Hymnorum* (now in the Franciscan Library, Merchant's Quay, Dublin) where this hymn with its *Scholia* is to be found.

The *Vita Secunda* was probably a "find" of Father Patrick Fleming, or of Father Hugh Ward himself, for it was copied from a MS. in the Monastery of St. Hubert in the Ardennes; the *Vita Quarta* was copied from a MS. in the Monastery of "Alma in the Hannonia." Here two old *Lives* of our Apostle had been discovered, but as one of them was almost an exact *replica* of the *Vita Secunda*, it was not reproduced by Fleming. The *Vita Quinta*, written by a monk called Probus, had already been published in the Basel edition of Bede's works in 1563, whence

## INTRODUCTION

Colgan took it. The *Vita Sexta* was that written by Jocelin in connection with the Translation of the Relics of SS. Patrick, Brigid and Columcille, in 1186, and it too had already been printed, indeed printed twice. For having first appeared at Antwerp in 1514, at the expense of the Provincial of the Irish Franciscans, it was reproduced by Messingham.

The *Vita Septima* is the famous *Tripartite*, which of late years has been the object of profound study on the part of scholars like Dr. Eoin Mac Neill and Dr. Kathleen Mulchrone. The three very ancient MSS. from which Colgan translated and "adapted" his version had probably been among the booty gathered in by Michael O'Clery; for Colgan tells us that the first belonged to the O'Clerys, and was used as a textbook in their historical school; the second had served a similar purpose in the school of the Leinster *ollamhs*, the O'Deorans; of the third he could tell us nothing of the *provenance*.

The *Tripartite* appears to have been a sort of stock sermon in three parts on the life and miracles of St. Patrick, one of whose fourfold "honours" was to have a three-day celebration of his Feast each spring—and a sermon preached on each of them. For this purpose copies innumerable must have been made. In later days when the Feast was confined to a single day the material was condensed into the form in which it appears, for instance, in the "Homily on St. Patrick" in the *Lebar Brecc* and the "Book of Lismore." Dr. Kathleen Mulchrone, in her

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most valuable study of the *Vita Tripartita*, found five existing MSS. of the shorter version—all belonging to the 15th century.

### III.—OTHER SOURCES.

Under this heading we may conveniently group the Patrician Documents collected by Dr. Whitley Stokes in his edition for the Rolls Series (1887) of *The Tripartite Life of St. Patrick With Other Documents Relating to that Saint*.

In addition to the *Tripartite* (which he edited from two MSS : Rawlinson B. 512, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and Egerton 73, preserved in the British Museum, London), Dr. Whitley Stokes collected together for the first time in a convenient form, the Patrician Documents in the *Book of Armagh*, the *Confession*, and *Epistle against Coroticus*; the Preface to the *Fáed Fiada* (i.e., the Irish Hymn of St. Patrick); the *Hymn of Secundinus* with the Prefaces thereto in the Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum* and the *Lebar Brecc*; the *Hymn of Fiacc* with Preface and Notes in the Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum*; Ninnine's Prayer; Homily on St. Patrick in the *Lebar Brecc* and an *Appendix* containing those portions of Muirchu which are wanting in the *Book of Armagh*, but available in the Brussels MS. of Muirchu edited by Father Edmund Hogan, S.J., for the Bollandists; and a complete collection (as far as we can judge) of all references to St. Patrick in Chronicles and other mediaeval documents.

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It is from the "Sources" set forth above that the present *Life of St. Patrick* derives its materials. But it is a duty for one writing on our Apostle at the present day to acknowledge how much the task has been lightened by the great labours of those who have gone before—Lanigan, Canon O'Hanlon, Todd, Father Shearman, Cardinal Moran, Father Morris, Father Sylvester Malone, Archbishop Healy, Dr. Bury and the numerous others who have left us outstanding biographies of our beloved Patron—or other works dealing with him. In the presence of so many excellent books on the subject it may well be asked is there any need for a new one—even in this year when Ireland is preparing to celebrate, with the "Royal Hosting" of her Eucharistic King, the memory of the fifteenth centenary of the coming of Patrick to her shores?

I think there is; for in recent years "Patrician" studies have taken on a new life, and there is now available a new body of evidence, or at least a new method of approach to, and appraisement of, that evidence which puts many Patrician problems in a new light. Outstanding achievements in this most fruitful field are the publication of Dr. Gwynn's superb edition of the *Book of Armagh* (1913); the splendid critical edition of the *Latin Writings of St. Patrick*, by Dr. Newport J. D. White (1905); the systematic and expert criticism of Patrician "sources," by Dr. Bury, both in his own valuable *St. Patrick, His Place in History*, and in papers contributed to the

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*Guardian*, the *English Historical Review*,  
*Hermathena*, etc.

Giant service to the same great cause was given by Father Edmund Hogan, S.J., not only in his edition of the *Documenta de S. Patricio* (Brussels, 1882—1889), but in his critical papers in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* ("Patrician Documents," etc.). The work begun by Father Hogan has been taken up in these latter days by the learned Jesuit's distinguished pupil, Dr. Eoin MacNeill, who has recently published an important series of articles including those on "Silvam Focluti," and the "Birthplace of St. Patrick" in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*; in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*: papers on "The Earliest Lives of St. Patrick"; "Dates of Texts in the Book of Armagh"; "The Origin of the Tripartite Life of St. Patrick"; and in *Eriu* (Vol. XI. Part 1, 1930), a further study of the *Vita Tripartita*.

The *Vita Tripartita* has been also in recent days the object of a very profound and illuminating study by Dr. Kathleen Mulchrone, M.A.; *Abfassungzeit und Überlieferung der Vita Tripartita in Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* (xvi., 1927); while Mr. Henry Morris, Divisional Inspector under Department of Education, has brought his great knowledge of topography to bear on those problems of Patrician topography which centre round Tirechán's and the author of the *Tripartite's* account of St. Patrick's movements in what is now Co. Sligo.

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To all these studies, and to a very suggestive article on St. Patrick contributed by Father Shaw, S.J., to the *Irish Monthly* of March, 1930, the present author is much indebted. She has also had the advantage of consulting Father John McErlean, S.J., and Father John Ryan, S.J., on certain points that presented difficulty to her.

It is now her pleasant duty to thank good friends who kindly lent her books: the Rector and Community of the Jesuit College, Galway; Dr. John Howley, M.A., and his courteous assistant, Mr. Fahy, who placed the resources of the Library, University College, Galway, at her disposal; Rev. Dean Hynes, M.A., of U.C., Galway, who drew her attention to certain important papers; the Secretary and staff of London Library; the Community of St. Columban's, Dalgan Park; V Rev. B. Murphy, P.P., Ballycastle, Co. Antrim; and many others. But, above all, she has incurred a deep obligation towards the Irish Province of the Friars Minor for the loan of a copy of the *Trias Thaumaturga*, a treasure of their Cork Convent. To Father Provincial, to Father Custos, to Father Dominic, to Father Jarlath, to Father Jerome, and last, but not least, to the unfailing kindness of her dear friend, Father Gregory Cleary, she wishes to put on record her great gratitude.

HELENA CONCANNON.

LIOS NA MARA,

GALWAY.

(*Feast of St. Elisabeth of Hungary*, 1930.)

(D 818)

It is impossible to exaggerate the debt Patrician *Forscher* owe to Dr. J. D. Newport White, as, until he gave us for the first time the text of the Latin Writings of St. Patrick "constructed on a definite critical principle from all the known MSS.," one had to build one's superstructure on foundations of whose soundness there was no scientific guarantee. In the present book quotations from the *Confession*, the *Epistle* and Muirchu's *Vita* are, for the most part, taken from his English renderings.



[A.M.D.G.]

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## SAIN T P A T R I C K :

### HIS LIFE AND MISSION

*Chapter I.—The Coming of the Apostle.*



HE screaming of agitated seagulls, a sort of panic movement in his flocks, drew the swineherd from the woodland glade he had selected for his noontide rest towards the shore.

As he hastened through the shadowy forest ways a strange music, sweet and solemn, met him, borne on the breeze that came to him, warm with the sun and salt from the sea. Guided by the music he made for a small creek where a stream emptied itself into one of the blue indentations of the Bay. There a startling sight awaited him. A band of outland men, with shaven heads and garments that glistened white in the sunshine were mooring their boats, the while they chanted in some unknown tongue, words set to a heart moving melody.

Before the strangers, occupied with their craft, could catch sight of him, the swineherd was speeding to the *dún* of his lord, Dichu, to tell the chieftain of their arrival. In those old days danger was instinctively associated with the unknown ; and the swineherd, fearing that these outland folk, for all their peaceable appearance, were foreign pirates, ran to warn his master of their landing, so that he might put his *dún* in a state of defence, and take measures for the protection of his people.

Charged with a greater message than he dreams that unnamed swineherd runs this day towards the *dún* of Dichu above the blue waters of Loch Cuan (Strangford Lough). For unknown to himself his is the voice of the herald proclaiming to the men and women of Eire that their predestined Apostle had opened his heavenly mission in their land.

As we read in Muirchu's narrative the story of St. Patrick's first missionary conquests, we are brought to a part of Ireland, which should be for ever hallowed and dear to Pádraic's children. It is the " Island Plain "—Mag Inis—every foot of which is drenched with Patrician memories. Here, on the morrow of his landing, our Apostle said his first Mass in the *sabhall*, or barn of Dichu, son of Trichem, which was to be his first church in Eire. Here he formed his first Christian community. In the immediate neighbourhood his fellow-missioners, Bishop Loarn and Bishop Tassach founded churches at Brechtan (Bright) and Rathcolpa (Raholp). And here, most appeal-

ing memory of all, when the weariness of old age came upon him, Pádraic returned to rest from his labours, to prepare "to go the way of his fathers," to give an account of his stewardship, "to make known the gift of God," and to write, against the men who had misunderstood and despised him, the immortal *Apologia pro Vita Sua*—"and this is my Confession before I die."

Knowing nothing of the associations which for future ages were to make blessed the ground he trod, the Chieftain, Díchu and his men-at-arms, in their battle garments and fighting equipment, with their tall hunting dogs at their sides, were hastening from the *dún* to the little river, Slan, where the swineherd had discovered the strangers. As they came near (the *Tripartite* tells us) the Chieftain set his dog at the intruders. But a strange thing happened. The leader of the white-robed foreigners turned quietly, and then began to intone the verse : "*ne tradas Domine bestiis animas confitentes tibi.*" At the sound of that voice the fierce wolfhound of the Chieftain, his savage fury turned suddenly to gentleness, crouched at the stranger's feet, fawning and licking his hand, while the unknown fondled the noble animal's head in a manner which showed that he loved dogs—and had handled them before—speaking soothing words in the musical Gaelic. A strange emotion gripped the heart of the Chieftain at the sight. Looking upon the face of Padraic he loved him; and putting all fear and hostility aside, Díchu bade the strangers welcome, and led them joyfully to his *dún*, where

they were to find food, and shelter, and repose.

For some days Pádraic remained at the *dún* of Díchu, and using again the Irish speech which he had learned in his boyhood in that Ulidian land, he told the Chieftain and his people of the great message with which he was charged for the folk of Eire—tidings of the One True God, and the One True Faith.

To these tidings Díchu and his family and followers listened eagerly. “ And Díchu believed, and Padraic baptized him,” says the *Tripartite* (ignoring, or forgetting, the necessary probation of the “ catechumenate ”); and he offered his “ sabhall ” (or barn) to Pádraic; and there on the morrow, the edifice having been duly prepared, and Mass vessels, and vestments, and altar-stone having been brought from the boats, and an altar set up, the Apostle of Ireland said his first Mass on Irish soil for his first Irish converts.

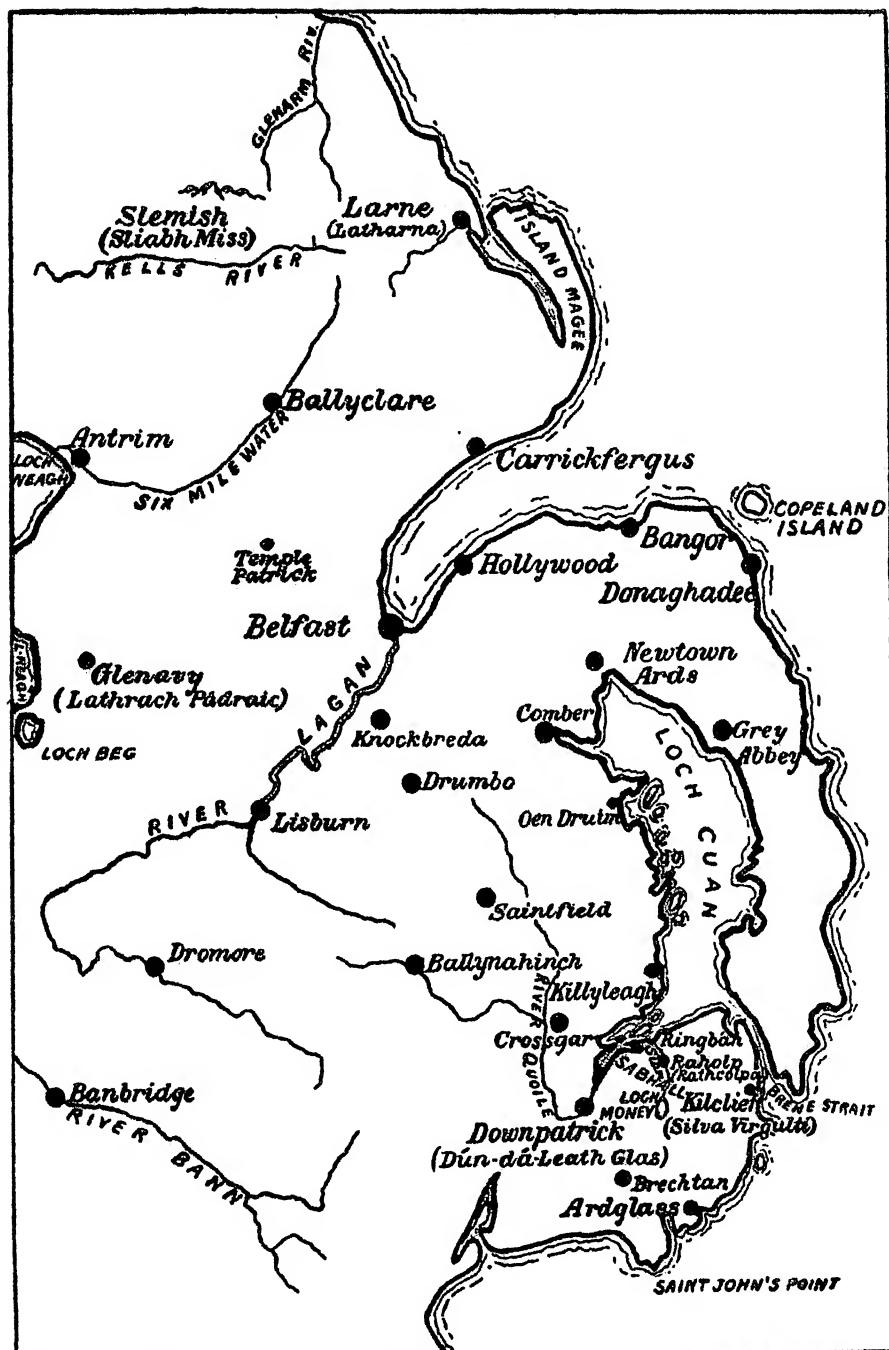
A very moving errand had guided St. Patrick’s boat through the narrow strait of Brene and up the rushing waters of Strangford Lough, to the mouth of the Slan, or Slaney river, within two miles of Díchu’s *dún* where the swineherd had first found them. It has been pointed out that no one unfamiliar with the tides of that “ fast-locked ” Bay could have negotiated the difficult course; and Mrs. Green, adopting a suggestion of Mr. F. J. Biggar, speaks of St. Patrick’s voyage to Sabhall as “ a journey carefully planned before, and guided by a skilled pilot of the country.” Perhaps the “ skilled pilot ” was

no other than the saint himself, and he had learned the difficult "chart" of Loch Cuan, with so many other hard lessons, in the strange school which the Master had chosen for him to prepare him for his life's mission. As for the journey having been carefully planned, Muirchu gives us good warrant for the belief, in telling us its object.

As a slave boy Pádraic had herded on the slopes of Sliabh Mis (Slemish) the flocks of his master, Miliucc; and now a bishop, charged with a great mission, he had nothing more at heart than to rescue his old owner from the servitude of paganism. "With that end in view," writes Muirchu, "it seemed to him that there was nothing better for him to do than to ransom himself in the first instance. So he sought

the north country, carrying a twofold ransom from slavery—to wit, an earthly and a heavenly—to that heathen man, Miliucc, in whose house he had once lived in captivity, that he might deliver from captivity him whom he had formerly served as a captive. . . Wishing to go with all speed to visit the aforesaid Miliucc, and bring him his ransom, and thus convert him to the faith of Christ, St. Patrick left his ship in charge of Dichu, and began a land journey into the country of the Cruidneni [Picts] until he reached Sliabh Mis."

The saint's plan, as we learn from the account just quoted, was to present himself to his old master, Miliucc Macchu Buain (a chieftain of *Dál Buain*, whose sept lands lay to the east of Lough



LANDING PLACE OF ST. PATRICK.

Neagh) and under pretext of regularising his position towards the slave-owner from whom he had escaped, by payment of a ransom, resume relations with him. This being done, he counted on the tolerance of the chief, to allow him to establish his first "christianity" among the people with whom he had lived during six years of his servitude. And in his apostle's heart there burned the desire of winning for Christ Miliucc himself, "that he might deliver from captivity, him whom he had formerly served as a captive."

Here, as so often in our reconstruction of St. Patrick's story (of which the surviving written *Monumenta* are of a date so many centuries posterior to the events they purport to record) we find ourselves asking a question to which our documents give no ready answer. Why should St. Patrick, if his objective was Sliabh Mis, come to anchor in Strangford Lough, and put on himself the difficult land journey across the wide stretch of territory that lies between Mag Inis and the valley of the Braid, when there were so many other havens, from which Miliucc's territory could have been more swiftly and conveniently reached? Is it possible that some of his boyhood's friends among the family of Miliucc had lived in Mag Inis, and that our saint had been drawn to the district by the expectation of finding them there? That supposition is suggested by the charming story told in the *Tripartite* of Padraic's encounter with the little herdsboy, who was afterwards to be the great Saint Mochaoi of Nendrum. A tradition en-

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shrined in the *Book of Lecan* and the *Martyrology of Donegal* makes Mochaoi's mother, Bronach, a daughter of Miliucc ; and since Padraic's first meeting with her son is staged by the *Tripartite* between Saul and Bright, and the island of Nendrum<sup>1</sup> where Mochaoi afterwards founded his monastery, is in Strangford Lough, there is good warrant for the belief that the lands of the family into which Bronach had married were in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately the name of Bronach's husband, and Mochaoi's father, has not come down to us, to help us to put this supposition to the test. In its absence, however, we are free to believe that in coming to Mag Inis Pádraic was possibly drawn by the hope of meeting there one of the children of his master, who had been kind to him in his slave days, and to whom he had repaid their gentleness by instruction in the Christian Faith. "Then used Miliucc's sons and daughters come to him with a ration, and he used to instruct them concerning Christian piety," says the *Betha Patraic* in the *Book of Lismore*. That Pádraic never forgot the kindness of these children, and that he kept in touch with them after his escape from Ireland, emerge from the story of his subsequent relations with others of them ; for we find him, during his missionary career, enlisting one of Miliucc's sons, Guasacht, in his own company, and making him Bishop at Granard, while two of Miliucc's daughters, the two Emers, he consecrated as virgins to God, founding for them

<sup>1</sup> Now called Island Mahee, and joined to the mainland.

the convent of Clonbroney. The supposition suggests itself that he never lost touch with the younger members of Miliucc's family, and that in landing in Strangford Lough, he may have been counting on finding in the neighbourhood, one of them, Bronach, the mother of St. Mochaoi; while his acquaintance with the "chart" of the Lough could easily have been gained during earlier visits of Miliucc's shepherd to Bronach and her husband. Were they both dead when our saint landed? The subsequent course of the narrative would seem to suggest as much.

At all events Muirchu tells us that after a few day's rest in Dichu's *dún* St. Patrick proceeded on his "land journey" to Sliabh Mis, the scene of his boyhood's labours and captivity—and after a wearying journey he arrived at last within sight of Miliucc's abode.

He stood for a time lost in ancient memories, recalling the old scenes and living again through the old emotions. On that bowl-shaped mountain above the valley of the Braid what nights he had passed, and what a Comrade had shared them with him! There in the silence of the woods, and under the white mystery of the stars, Christ had come to him, the lonely slave boy, and changed the world for him—making cold, and hunger, and loneliness, and the exile's heartache unfelt because "the Spirit was burning" within him. He remembered days that were one long union with God, and wintry dawns wherein he "felt no hurt," even amid snow storms, and

iron frosts, and tempestuous winds and rains, so dear the delights of prayer to which the Spirit had roused him.

Tender human memories were not absent—thoughts of the kind children of Miliucc, who, as often as they could, had brightened and shortened the long days of solitary herding by their company, who had claimed it as their privilege to bring him his supplies, and who had listened so eagerly when he told them of Christ, with love of Whom his own heart was burning. Dear and beautiful forms of Irish children, whose voices were to ring for many a year through Patrick's dreams—and give his heart no rest until he should “walk once more amongst them.”

There are few more affecting pictures of our saint than that which Muirchu draws of him, standing in sight of the old scenes of his youth, the places of his captivity which he had revisited “with such gracious purpose.” So holy did the spot seem that the people of the neighbourhood afterwards marked it with a cross; and this cross was there when Muirchu wrote his dramatic account of the dreadful end of Miliucc, and St. Patrick's grief for the failure of his first missionary enterprise :—

“ Now when Miliucc heard that his slave was coming to see him, to the end that he should, at the close of his life, adopt, as it were, by force, a religion which he disliked [fearing] lest he should be in subjection to a slave, and that he [the slave] should lord it over him, he committed himself to the flames, at the instigation of the

devil and his own accord. Having collected around him every article of his property, he was burnt up in the house in which he had lived as king.

" Now St. Patrick was standing in the aforesaid place, on the southern side of Sliabh Mis, where, coming with such gracious purpose, he first caught sight of the country where he had been a slave, a spot which is now marked with a cross ; and at the first view of that country, there under his eyes, he beheld the burning pyre of the king.

" And so, stupefied at this deed, he spoke not a word for two or three hours. And then with sighs and tears and groans he uttered these words and said : ' I know not, God knoweth. As to this king man who has committed himself to the flames, lest he should become a believer at the close of his life, and serve the everlasting God—I know not ; God knoweth ; none of his sons shall sit as king upon the throne of his kingdom from generation to generation.

" Having said this, he prayed and armed himself with the sign of the cross, and quickly bent his steps to the country of the Ulaid, by the way he had come, and arrived again at Mag Inis to Diclu ; and there he went round the whole countryside, and chose [clergymen] and did deeds of love, and there the faith began to grow."

The honour which Patrick had designed for Miliucc—to make him the protector of his first " christianity "—having been tragically rejected by our saint's old master, was joyfully claimed by

Dichu. The *Sabhall* or barn, where our Apostle had said his first Mass, was transformed into his first Irish church, and became the nucleus of one of his most beloved foundations ; and “ the blessing of Patrick on Dichu ” rests still on the “ children of Dichu,” the sturdy Catholic people of Mag Inis, who through all the centuries have clung to the Faith of Patrick, “ in spite of dungeon, fire and sword ” :—

“ The blessing of God on Dichu  
 Who gave me the Barn !  
 May he have in return for it  
 A heavenly home, bright, pure, great !

The blessing of God on Dichu  
 Dichu with the full sheep folds,  
 No one of his sept or kindred  
 Shall die except after a long life.”

A temporary headquarters having been thus secured, Patrick and his missionaries set to work at once, and during the first six months after their arrival were active in evangelising the surrounding districts, and in making arrangements for the great advance they had planned for the following spring. Doubtless amongst other difficulties many of them had to tackle was that of the language, and Patrick was glad that his Gallic and British assistants should have the opportunity Dichu’s hospitality afforded of studying Irish before he should go further in the great enterprise he had planned.

The first conversions following those of Dichu and his people were effected among Dichu's immediate relatives. Not far from Sabhall (Saul) is the town of Bright, which at the time of our saint's arrival in our land, was called Durlus, and was the "strong fort" of Ros, another son of Trichem, and therefore a brother of Dichu. Of his first interview with St. Patrick the *Vita Tertia* tells a curious story. Ros, it would appear, was not pleased when he heard of his brother Dichu's adherence to the foreign creed, and when the Apostle, probably acting on Dichu's suggestion, went to Durlus in the hope of winning over the lord of that fort, the latter "fought against the saint, and refused to believe." Now Ros was very old, and Saint Patrick put it to him that it was very foolish of him to strive for this life which was failing him, while he gave no heed to the life to come. He drew a graphic, if unflattering, picture of old age as exemplified in Ros—failing senses, dimming eyes, deafness, stuttering speech, toothless gums—and then he asked the old chief "if anyone would make you young again, would you believe?"

"Yes," replied Ros, "if anyone gave me back my youth I would believe with my whole heart."

Then Patrick prayed, and Ros received at the prayer the gift of restored youth, and became once more the brave handsome young warrior of the long ago. Thereupon he believed, and was baptized with three other sons of Trichem, his

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brothers, and great numbers of their “ followers and fosterers.” But with the grace of Baptism Ros got a clearer sight of realities than even the restored light of his eyes had given him. For the choice being put to him whether he wished for a long life on earth, or the immediate enjoyment of life eternal, he chose the latter, and immediately, having received the Holy Eucharist, he went forth to the unveiled Vision of the Lord.

This curious story is interesting, not so much intrinsically, as for suggesting the origin of the Irish folk tales, which were so popular, concerning Oisin (another recipient of the gift of restored—or rather retained—youth) and St. Patrick. It probably had a didactic purpose, as showing the contrast between the pagan idea of Tír na nÓg, and the Christian idea of Heaven—and it suggests one of the approaches made use of by our Apostle in delivering his message to the Irish people, who, even as Pagans, believed in “ a life after death,” and, therefore, in all probability in the immortality of the soul.

It is on the way between Sabhall (Saul) and Durlus (Bright) that the *Tripartite* places St. Patrick’s first meeting with young Mochaoi, the first Irish boy whom he recruited into his company and who thus had the honour of inaugurating the “ school,” from which our Apostle derived a missionary instrument on which he placed special reliance—a native Irish priesthood. Mochaoi, as I have already mentioned, is said to have been a son of Bronach, daughter of Miliucc, and therefore St. Patrick’s meeting with

him is perhaps not so fortuitous as the *Tripartite* makes it. Perhaps, as I have suggested, our saint came to Strangford Lough (which would otherwise seem to be a singularly inconvenient harbour from which to reach Sliabh Mis) with the prospect of being received there by his old friend, Bronach, and her husband. Perhaps they were dead when St. Patrick came back to Ireland, and their son's unprotected orphanhood may have been the cause of the rather menial occupation at which the saint is represented as finding him. We can only make conjectures about this situation, and set down the story as it is told in the *Tripartite* :

" Now while Patrick was going along his way [i.e., between Saul and Bright] he saw a tender youth herding swine. Mochaoi was his name. Patrick instructed him, and baptized him, and tonsured him and gave him a gospel and a *menister*. And he gave him also, at another time, a crozier that had been bestowed on them by God [and which fell from heaven] with its top in Patrick's bosom, and its foot in Mochaoi's, and this is the *Etech* (' winged crozier ') of Mochaoi of Nendrum."

Mochaoi, in after years, founded the Monastery of Nendrum (now called after him, Mahee Island) in Strangford Lough, the recent excavation of which under the direction of Mr. H. C. Lawlor has given such remarkable results, and thrown such new light on ancient Irish monastic buildings. In the Irish " Golden Legend " his memory lives on through a charming story which,

curiously enough, enforces the same lesson as the story of Ros, just related—viz., the incomparable happiness of heaven. Here is the legend, as Michael O'Clery, “worthy chief of the Four Masters,” tells it in the *Martyrology of Donegal*.

“ 23 June. Mochaoi, Abbot of n. Aondruim in Uladh. Bronach, daughter of Miliucc maccu Buain (with whom Patrick was in captivity), was his mother. He went with seven score young men to cut wattles to make a church. He himself was engaged at the work, and cutting wood like the rest. He had his load ready before the others, and he kept it by his side. As he was so, he heard a bright bird singing on the blackthorn near him. He was more beautiful than the birds of the world. And the bird said: ‘That is difficult work O Cleric.’ ‘This is required of us in building a Church of God,’ said Mochaoi—‘Who is addressing us?’ enquired Mochaoi. ‘A man of the people of my Lord is here,’ was the answer—i.e., an angel of God from heaven. ‘Hail to thee,’ said Mochaoi, ‘and wherefore hast thou come hither?’ ‘To address thee from thy Lord, and to amuse thee for a while.’ ‘I like this,’ said Mochaoi. The bird then cleaned his beak on the feathers of his wing. Three hundred years did Mochaoi remain listening, having his bundle of sticks by his side in the middle of the wood, and the wood was not the more withered, and the time did not seem to him longer than one hour of the day. The angel afterwards bade him farewell. He went then to the church carrying his wattles with him, and

he saw an oratory in the church which had been erected for his soul by his people. He wondered thereat. He went then to the town, and he knew nobody, and nobody knew him, until he himself told his adventures, and what had befallen him with the bird. When they heard this they all knelt to him, and they made a shrine of the wattles, and they built a church in the place where he had been listening to the bird. Of this the following was sung :

A sleep without decay of the body  
Mochaoi of Aondruim slept ;  
Of the people of the congregation where the sage  
    was  
He found only the descendants in the fifth degree.

Three melodies of delightful music  
The angel, in shape of a bird, sang  
In the middle of the wood at the foot of the tree  
Fifty years each melody lasted."

## *Chapter II.—The Boyhood of St. Patrick*



E may take it for granted that in the pleasant intimacy which marked his intercourse with his missionary *protégés* during their first winter in Mag Inis, Diclu learned all about the previous history of St. Patrick ; and though we alas ! can never come to the fulness of knowledge which the chieftain of Sabhall thus attained, we are like him in this : that all we know with absolute certainty of our Apostle's early life is derived from his own statements in his own authentic writings : *The Confession* and *The Epistle against Coroticus* :

From the *Confession*<sup>1</sup> we learn that his father was named Calpurnius, and his grandfather, Potitus—both Roman names ; that the former was a deacon, and the latter a priest ; that his paternal home was in the *vicus*, or town, of Banavem Taberniae (or Bannaventa Berniae), and that the family had a small villa (" *villula* ") in the neighbourhood, where the saint was captured, at the age of sixteen, and carried off into Ireland " with many thousands of persons."

The *Epistle*<sup>2</sup> adds the further information that

<sup>1</sup> *Conf.* i.

<sup>2</sup> *Epis.* io. " I was well born according to the flesh. My father was a decurion." *Epis.* io : " They harried the men servants and maid servants of my father's house."

Calpurnius, our Apostle's father, was a decurion, or member of the town Senate ; and that he was a man of substance, as well as of distinguished standing, appears from the fact that he had a "villula," or country residence, and a considerable establishment of men servants and maid servants.

Where was Banavem Taberniae (or Bannaventa Berniae, as most scholars prefer to read it, since the discovery, in the Würzburg MS., of the portion of Muirchu's *Life* missing from the *Book of Armagh*) ? If we could answer that question definitely, we should be in a position to write "solved" after a problem that has set more enquirers at work than almost any other in our history : the identification of the birthplace of St. Patrick. For it is pretty safe to assume, though the saint does not expressly say so, that he was born in the town near which he was captured.

It is now accepted that this town was in Britain, for St. Patrick speaks more than once of Britain as being the home of his family : thus in Chapter 23 of the *Confession* he says : "and again after a few years I was in Britain with my relatives, who received me as a son" ; and again, in Chapter 45 of the same work, speaking of the impossibility of leaving his post in Ireland in spite of his desire to pay a visit to Britain and Gaul, he talks of "proceeding to Britain as to my fatherland and relatives."

That he was a Roman citizen of British birth also emerges from two expressions in the *Epistle*

*against Coroticus.* In Chapter 2 referring to the soldiers of Coroticus he hesitates to call them (what they apparently were) " his fellow citizens, and fellow citizens of the holy Romans," since by their evil deeds they had made themselves " fellow-citizens of the demons." Yet, they were " his own " (Chap. 11),<sup>3</sup> though they had betrayed the loyalties of a common blood and a common faith. Now Coroticus was certainly a British chieftain—and the whole burden of the *Epistle* is the shocked indignation of the saint that men of his own race, and Christians, at least in name, should have inflicted such a dastardly outrage on his Irish neophytes, and an appeal to his fellow ecclesiastics in his native Britain, to give no countenance to Coroticus, until he had " made amends before God "; by public penance, and had liberated the " servants of God and baptized handmaidens of Christ," whom his soldiers had taken captive.

Muirchu, the earliest biographer of our saint, expressly states that he was of " British race, and born in Britain"; and the interesting fact is mentioned that Patrick in addition to his Roman name had a British name—Sochet.<sup>4</sup>

But even in Muirchu's time the location of the mysterious *vicus*, Bannaventa Berniae (or, as it appears in the only text of this chapter of Muirchu which has come down to us, Banavem Thaburinde) was a matter of speculation.

<sup>3</sup> *Ep. Cap. 11.*—" Et si mei me non cognoscunt *propheta in patria sua honorem non habet.*"

<sup>4</sup> Muirchu I. 1.—" Patricius, qui et Sochet vocabatur, Brito natione, in Britannis natus."

Muirchu, himself, made diligent enquiries about it, and gives us the result : " We have ascertained repeatedly that this town is unquestionably Ventre." To Muirchu, too, we owe the important information that it was " not far distant from our sea "—" haud procul a mari nostro "—that is, near the Irish Channel.

Unfortunately, Muirchu's solution does not help us very far ; for we are as much in the dark as to the identification of his " Ventre," as to that of the place name of which it was the gloss. I am inclined to think, however, that there is much to be said for identifying " Ventre " with " Venta Silurum,"<sup>5</sup> the modern Caerwent, " not far distant " from the estuary of the Severn, " haud procul a mari nostro."

How, then, it will be objected, did certain ancient Irish writers (such as the 11th century scholiast on the *Hymn* ascribed to Fiacc, the author of the *Tripartite*, the Lebar Brecc homilist, etc.) definitely state that " Ventre " (or " Nemthur," as it had become at the hands of some of the copyists, and appears in the *Hymn* ascribed to Fiacc) was identical with " Ail Cluade " (" the Rock of the Clyde ") the modern Dumbarton ? I believe that a satisfactory answer can be found to that very pertinent question.

In the year 573 a certain Prince of the Cymry, Rhydderch, victorious in the battle of

<sup>5</sup> I had arrived at this conclusion before I had the gratification of learning that the opinion is shared by Dr. Eoin MacNeill.

Arderydd, established himself on the " Rock of the Clyde,"<sup>6</sup> which afterwards became the capital of the Kingdom of Strathclyde, over which his descendants reigned. Now Rydderych Hen (" the Old ") as he was called, was sixth in descent from Coroticus, against whom St. Patrick wrote his famous *Epistle*; and the descendants of Coroticus being the resident Princes of Ail-Cluade, it was more or less taken for granted by seventh century writers, to whom this state of affairs was a familiar contemporary fact, that the dynasty (including Coroticus himself) had always ruled from that stronghold. Indeed Muirchu (or whoever wrote the headings for his *capita*) speaks of Coroticus as " King of Aloo " (Book I., 29), which scholars have agreed to interpret as Ail-Cluade or Dumbarton. This is a mistake on Muirchu's part; for it was the great-great-great-grandson of Coroticus, Rydderych, who was the first of his line to rule in Ail-Cluade, and his establishment there dates from A.D. 573—more than a century after St. Patrick's death.

As we read the " Letter against Coroticus," the impression makes itself very strongly felt that Coroticus ruled in the district of which St. Patrick was a native ; and evidently the scholiast on the *Hymn of Fiacc*, the homilist of the *Tripartite*, and the homilist of the *Lebar Brecc* shared this view. Believing (wrongly) that

<sup>6</sup> I find the date for the Battle of Arderydd (identified with the Knowes of Arthuret, about 9 miles from Carlisle—which had hitherto been the capital of the Northern Cymry) in Rhys : *Celtic Britain*, p. 145.

Coroticus ruled in Ail Cluade (or Dumbarton) they identified Muirchu's "Ventre" (transformed by puzzled copyists of later days into "Neutria," "Neustria," "Nemthur") with this stronghold, and on the strength of this identification located our saint's birthplace at the extreme Western end of the Antonine Wall, itself the extreme Northern limit of the Roman power in Britain.

St. Patrick's own account of his family, meagre though it be, makes it seem highly improbable that his youth was spent in that Caledonian region "stern and wild," and exclusively military. His father was a decurion; therefore there must have been a town in the neighbourhood with a *curia*, or town council. He belonged to a family which had been Christian—and "Romanized"—for several generations, and clerical for at least two. He belonged to a part of the country where well established "Romanization" had made Roman ideas of comfort, and *bien-être*, a matter of course; to a part of Britain where people of means had "villas," and establishments of "men servants and maid servants"—in fact all the advantages of civilisation as it was then understood; where there were churches, and schools, and regularly organized Christian communities. Now the late Professor Haverfield, the great authority on Roman Britain, has pointed out that under Roman rule the two parts of the island were divided "almost as if one had been *domi* and the other *militiae*," the northern and western uplands

occupied only by troops, and the eastern and southern lowlands which contained nothing but civilian life. "We shall not find much trace of Romanization in the uplands. There neither towns existed nor villas. Northwards, no town or country house has been found beyond the neighbourhood of Aldborough (Isurium), some fifteen miles north-west of York."<sup>7</sup> The very interesting "Antonine Wall Report," issued by the Glasgow Archæological Society (1899) enables us to visualise what life must have been for the garrisons which kept "watch and ward" along that strictly military line, and forces us to agree emphatically with Professor Bury's view that "the Rock of Clyde," in the eighties of the fourth century, "is the last place we should expect to find the *villula* of a Roman decurion"—or that could have produced, we may add, a son with the "townsman" outlook which is essentially St. Patrick's.

The birthplace of our saint, therefore, is to be sought with more probability in a part of Britain where long established peaceful conditions had allowed Roman ideas of social life and municipal government to take a strong hold on the native population as well as on the colonists themselves; and recent excavations at Venta Silurum (Caerwent) prove how truly these *criteria* hold for that interesting Brito-Roman city.

The foundation of Venta dates from a pretty early period of the Roman occupation of Britain, and is placed between A.D. 80 and A.D. 85. It

<sup>7</sup> Haverfield : *Romanisation of Roman Britain*, p. 24.

had a *Curia* from at least the third century, and some authorities hold as early as the second. It had guilds of tradesmen (a fact which shows an active industrial life), and a *Forum* and *Basilica* for the administration of its public business. It possessed the only stone amphitheatre yet excavated in Britain, and evidence of the comfort which its citizens enjoyed is afforded not only by the style of house (both of the "corridor" and "courtyard" type) revealed by the *fouilles*, but by other remains. In some of the houses cubes of charcoal have been found, and coal has been discovered in others, showing what care was taken to keep the *hypocaustum* well supplied, and the "central heating" carefully attended to. Traces of a fishmonger's shop have been found in the Forum, and a most elaborate bathing installation—with *frigidarium*, *tepidarium*, *caldarium*, *laconicum* and *apodyterium* (dressing room) has been traced in connection with one of the private houses, showing to what a degree of elaboration the inhabitants, after the Roman fashion, had carried the cult of the bath.<sup>8</sup>

Whether Venta was the home of St. Patrick's childhood or not, we are forced by the auto-biographical data supplied by his own writings, to seek in some similarly "Romanized" British town, the surroundings in which he passed his youth to his sixteenth year. The fact that both his father and his grandfather were clerics indicates that his home was a *foyer* of education

<sup>8</sup> *Excavations of Caerwent* (1907—12). Reports by Ashby, King and Hudd in *Archaeologia*, vols. 61, 62, 64.

and culture. His mother may have died when he was young—leaving his father thus free to take deacon's orders—for he makes no mention of her, at least in any of the texts of the *Confession* that have come down to us; though one of the *Lives* collected by Colgan (*Vita Quarta*) professing to quote from the *Confession*, makes our saint say: “I am Patrick, son of Calfurnius, having for my mother Concessa.”

Muirchu also gives Concessa as the name of our Apostle's mother; and the scholiast on the *Hymn of Fiacc*, the homilist of the *Tripartite*, and Marianus Scottus make her a connection—one of them, even a sister—of St. Martin of Tours. This does not seem possible; but it may point to Tours as the place of her origin. That she was of Frankish race has been stated by most of the writers who have mentioned her, but by this they probably meant she was a native of Gaul.

Some time about 389, to the good Brito-Roman Calpurnius and his Gallic wife, Concessa, was born a son who was called in Roman style Patricius Magonus Sucatus<sup>9</sup>—but for whom family usage reserved the last name Suchat as being that, perhaps, of one of his British “forbears.” Whether in addition to having a British as well as two Roman names the boy spoke the British as well as the Latin language we have no means of determining—but it is very likely; for

<sup>9</sup> Thus Professor Bury explains the origin of our saint's two additional names mentioned by Tirechán on the authority of Bishop Ultan: “Magnus qui est clarus, Sucetus qui est deus fortis” Tir.

the British tongue maintained its hold under the "Romanization" of the period, and some of Patrick's missionary colleagues were to find it very useful when brought in contact with British princesses married in Ireland.

At the due age young Suchat was sent to school to follow the usual curriculum of the cast-iron Roman system (with its two cycles of Grammar and Rhetoric) first elaborated by Quintilian, and followed more or less through the whole empire. His "Magister" may have been a priest, for in the rueful confession of childish follies which recurs so often in the *Confession*, he accuses himself and his companions in captivity as "not having been obedient to our priests, who used to admonish us for our salvation," and though this has only specific reference to their neglect of the moral and religious instruction of which the priests were the dispensers, it is not forcing the meaning too far to see in it a possible allusion to the combination in the priest of the office of pedagogue and preacher.

The high-spirited, active boy found the discipline of the school benches intolerably irksome—and we may take it for certain that he escaped from them as often as possible, and that he was much more useful on, and interested in, the work of the farm which his father had outside the town, than in the pages of Donat and Priscian, and that he was better at games of ball, etc., than at class declamations, and more successful in fishing and hunting expeditions than in the composition of rhetorical themes. In truth, like so many others,

who in after life attained greatness as explorers, colonisers—and missioners—there was in him a daring, an energy, an initiative, a necessity for action that made the plodding tasks of school an intolerable burden—and himself a very trying type of scholar to the conventional pedagogue.

Having visualised, as well as the scanty *data* at our command allow, the environment in which St. Patrick lived until his sixteenth year, it is piquant to find how our Irish forefathers “reconstructed” his youth. In the first place they gave him a whole big family of brothers and sisters : at least two brothers, Ruchti and Deacon Sannan, and up to five or six sisters : Tigris, Lupait, Richella, Cinnenum, Liamain and Darerca. And they trace the lineage both of father and mother up through several generations --arriving in the case of Calpurnius at “Brut,” the eponymous ancestor of the Britons himself.

The eleventh century scholiast on the *Hymn of Fiacc* glosses, as we have seen, the “Nemthur” of the Hymn :

“ Genair Patraicc in Nemthur,  
is ed atfet hi scelaib ”

as Ail-Cluade the “Dún of the Britons,” on a rock in the estuary of the Clyde at the extreme western end of the Antonine Wall. Not content with this, he and other writers of his school proceed to fill up the regrettable *lacunae* in the saint’s own account of his boyhood, by a series of marvels, which, though more to the taste of the generations for which they were

written than our own, have this attraction for us that they give us glimpses of a countryboy's life in ancient and mediæval Ireland, very difficult to find elsewhere. For the authors in question have unhesitatingly adopted the saint as "one of our own," and have painted his life as exactly like that of the boys with whom they were familiar. Like a little Irish boy we find him (in these accounts) given in fosterage, his childless aunt being represented as his foster-mother. The life described as that of the boy saint was probably typical of that led by the poorer Irish farming class, of the period—a hard life, made harder still by the oppressive exactions of the nobles in tributes of "curds and butter," and in forced labour.<sup>10</sup> A severe climate added to the troubles of the housewife in the poor little round huts of wattles and clay that were the homes of the people for many a century. We read in one story of St. Patrick's boyish miracles (chronicled in the *Tripartite*) of "a great flood and fulness of water that came on the dwelling where [the boy saint and his foster-mother] were biding; and it quenched the fire and all the vessels and gear of the house were a-swim." It was at this moment that the baby saint, who probably had been neglected in the confusion of the catastrophe, set up a howl for food! His poor foster-mother felt *that* was the last straw; and

<sup>10</sup> Thus in the *Tripartite*, I., 15, the Reachtaire or steward of the King of the Britons is represented on one occasion as forcing Patrick and his foster-mother to cleanse the hearth of the palace of Ail-Cluade, and on another as demanding tribute of curds and butter.

the exasperation of a woman at the extreme limit of her endurance reaches us (across the centuries) in her protest : “ truly we have something more to do before making food for thee, for not even the fire is alive.” On another occasion we hear of the boy, on a day of ice and snow, being sent out to gather firewood—and coming home with an armful of icicles instead !

But it is not always winter in these old tales—and here is one that comes to us with all the honied fragrance of a summer day in long vanished Irish woods :—

“ At another time the little boys of the place were bringing their mothers honey from the comb. His foster-mother said to Patrick : ‘ thou bringest no honey to me, my son, even as the boys of the hamlet bring it to their mother.’ Then taking a vessel he goes to the well, and blessed the water so that it became honey.”

There are pleasant pictures, too, of little St. Patrick being taken with other little boys to the milking-stead to get a drink of milk, as it comes foamy and warm from the cow ; or of him herding sheep with his small sister, Lupait, On another occasion we hear of the lad accompanying his foster parents to a great Aonach or Convention. In all of which stories we are reading—not indeed incidents of St. Patrick’s childhood as their naïve hearers took them to be, but experiences easily paralleled out of the ordinary life of the youngsters who listened to the preacher telling them, with much delight.

As we have said these writers locate the

birthplace of St. Patrick in Ail Cluade ; and a favourite place of pilgrimage in the middle ages was the well, about four miles from Dumbarton, where the baby saint is believed to have been baptized. The well was shaped like a cross, and over it a church was built so designed that the cruciform fountain was beside the altar. A document quoted by Father Gerald Stack in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* (1899 II., p. 451) gives us an interesting glimpse of the ancient pilgrimages to this Church of St. Patrick (Kilpatrick). We learn that there was an "Erenach" in charge of the place who, in or about 1170 was a certain Beda Ferdan. He lived in a great house built of wattles at the east side of the church beside the cemetery, and held the lands of Monachkernan from the ecclesiastical authorities under the obligation of entertaining pilgrims, who came to the sanctuary. These lands had been "donated to St. Patrick and the Church" by Alwyn, Earl of Lennox.

About 1227 the hereditary "erenachs" of Kilpatrick were deprived of the lands they held for the entertainment of pilgrims, and these lands were transferred by Maldowen, Earl of Lennox, to the Abbey of Paisley. The descendants of Beda Ferdan did not let go their office and lands without a struggle, they appealed to the Pope and the secular power. A papal Commission was appointed, and among the witnesses called to testify before it were a certain Malcolm Beg, a man called Anekol, and an Alexander son of Hugh. The first mentioned

testified on oath that "about sixty years or more previously he had seen a man called Beda Ferdan dwelling in a certain large house, built of wattles, adjoining the church of Kylpatrick towards the east." His evidence was amplified by Malcolm Beg, who also had seen "Beda Ferdan, having his house situated beside the cemetery of the church of Kylpatrick on the eastern side, and that he held in the name of the church that land of Monachkennaran . . . and on the products of that land and others held from the church, he kept a hospice for pilgrims rendering no other service [for the land]. Being asked in what Earl's time he saw this, he answered that it was in the time of Earl Alwyn, and that said Earl had donated that land of Kachconnen to Saint Patrick and to the Church."

So even if Kilpatrick, near Dumbarton, was not the place of St. Patrick's baptism—the scene of those miracles with which the devout imagination of our forefathers have surrounded the christening of the baby saint—it is a holy spot, sanctified by the prayers of the devout clients of St. Patrick, who came there, age after age, to seek the saint's help and intercession in their infirmities and miseries, or to appeal to the saint to do justice between them when there were matters in dispute. The *Vita Tertia* tells of the virtue ascribed to the flagstone on which the saint was supposed to have been laid after his birth. It seems to have been kept near the church, and "it is held in great honour," says the author of that *Life*, "on account of perjurors.

For the perjurors, when they swore upon it, saw it grow moist, as if it bewailed their crimes with tears, but if the accused swear the truth, it remains in its natural state."

With such memories of the ages of faith centring round that ancient sanctuary, it grieves us to hear how the late Archbishop Healy found the holy well, when in preparation for his monumental *Life and Writings of St. Patrick* he made a pious pilgrimage to the spot. " We could find no traces of St. Patrick's flagstone . . . We enquired carefully for the well. At first we could find no trace of it ; but presently we met an old woman who pointed out the spot where ' St. Patrick's Well used to be.' She had often carried water from it herself, ' and very good water it was,' but some nine or ten years ago the local authority of Kilpatrick closed up the well, which was already half filled with rubbish, so that now nothing remains to mark the spot except a few stones of the wall that once surrounded it, rising still above the surface, and the few venerable trees that kept its holy waters cool beneath their shade even in the hottest summer. One thing is clear, that the good people of Kilpatrick have small reverence for holy wells, or even for the saint who gave his name to their town, for otherwise they surely would never allow St. Patrick's Well to be filled with rubbish on the very margin of the highway, at the very gate of their ancient church."

Even the halo of poetry which Aubrey de Vere threw around that " many memoried " holy

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well at Kilpatrick has not been potent to save it. The pretty poem which opens the *Legends of St. Patrick* tells of the miraculous gushing forth of that fountain, and the miraculous cure of the old blind hermit, Gornias, who baptized the baby saint :—

“ The blind priest took the Infant’s hand :  
With that small hand, above the ground  
He signed the Cross. At God’s command  
A fountain rose with brimming bound.

In that pure wave, from Adam’s sin  
The blind priest cleansed the Babe with awe ;  
Then reverently, he washed therein  
His old, unseeing face, and saw !

He saw the earth ; he saw the skies,  
And that all-wondrous Child decreed  
A pagan nation to baptize  
And give the Gentiles light indeed.”

### *Chapter III.—The Hard School of Servitude.*



N the years of St. Patrick's boyhood—and indeed for the quarter of a century preceding his birth—there must have been, among the grave, responsible toga-clad citizens of his native town, whenever they met together at the baths, or in the forum, or the basilica, many an anxious discussion on the state of affairs in the world in general (which for these good people meant the Roman Empire) and on the prospects of their own *civitas* in particular, when the pessimism of the thoughts exchanged made sombre the discourse. But hardly even their gloomiest prognostications prepared any of them for the fact that the end of Roman rule in Britain was at hand, and that the mighty imperial power, which had seemed to them as unshakably based as the firmament on its divinely built foundations, was shortly to crumble into ruin.

In the year 364 while, as if at a preconcerted signal, the frontiers of the Empire were being attacked at all points by the "Barbarians," the Picts, and Scots, and Saxons and Atticotti began their raids on Britain. Rome, conscious of the peril, sent her best general, Theodosius, father of the Emperor of that name, with a formidable army of picked troops to combat it; and so

energetic were the measures he took that when he departed in A.D. 370, tranquillity had been assured, which lasted for about thirteen years.

At the end of that period new troubles came on the island. A Spaniard called Maximus, who had served in Britain under Theodosius, had himself proclaimed Emperor by the troops in that Province, and collecting a great army, both of imperial soldiers and British volunteers—the flower of the youth of the island—he went forth to win from his rival, the Emperor Gratian, the supreme power in Gaul (A.D. 383), and from Valentinian II, the mastery over Italy (A.D. 387). In the following year the generals of Maximus were defeated by Theodosius, and Maximus himself captured and put to death in Aquiliæ.

During the five years of his reign (383—388), Britain, denuded of troops, was subjected again to the incursions of the Scots, Picts, and Saxons ; and it was only after the death of Maximus that the son of Theodosius, now Emperor, entrusted to his most famous general, Stilicon, measures for the defence of the Province. But when Theodosius himself died (A.D. 395), and his son Honorius succeeded him in the West, the reign of the last Roman Emperor who was to rule over Britain had begun.

In 401 Alaric, King of the West Goths, advanced with a large army to the Julian Alps and entered Italy. Stilicon, in the endeavour to protect the throne and dominions of Honorius recalled the legions from Gaul and Britain for the

defence of Italy. From that moment until the final withdrawal of the Roman officials from Britain in A.D. 410, things went from bad to worse.

The great invasion of Gaul by the Vandals, Suevi, Alans and Burgundians which began on the last night of the year 406 had its repercussions in Britain. Communication with the metropolis having been cut off, the island troops left to themselves elected a succession of "tyrants" of their own, and killed them off when they were tired of them. Thus Marcus, proclaimed by the troops in Britain in 407, was speedily put to death by the very men who had elected him; and his successor, Gratian, a native of the island, had an even shorter spell of power, and an equally tragic end. Constantine, a private soldier, the next choice of the army, gave a better account of himself. Immediately after his proclamation he sailed for Gaul taking with him all the troops, and allowing the island to look after itself. Thus on an almost unwilling Britain was freedom forced, and Rome formally renounced all claims to it when in A.D. 410, the very year Alaric took the imperial city, Honorius wrote to the Britons that they must henceforth organize their own defence.

Leading the Scots, who with the Picts, and Atticotti, and Saxons again and again raided Britain during these troubled decades we meet the names of two kings illustrious in Irish history, Crimthann, and King Niall of the Nine Hostages. An ancient Irish tradition, enshrined in *Cormac's*

*Glossary*, has it that Crimthann had subjected Southern Britain even as far as the English Channel to Irish rule, and that Glastonbury was occupied by our countrymen. The "nine hostages," from whom Niall the Great got his name, were held (according to Michael O'Clery) by that monarch as proofs of his conquests over the "five 'fifths' of Eire, and from the Picts, Saxons, Britons and Gauls."

It may have been in the last hosting of King Niall—that which was ended by the "one cast" of the javelin of his banished foeman the Lagenian prince, Eochu, on the shores of the Iccian Sea<sup>1</sup>—that occurred the event which was to influence the destiny, not alone of St. Patrick himself, but of the Irish race—nay, of the whole world—until the end of time. The date given in our *Annals* for King Niall's death "overseas," corresponds, as far as we can reckon, with the attainment by Calpurnius's son, Patrick, of his sixteenth year. And in that year, as we know from his own *Confession*, he was captured at his father's *villula* by Irish raiders, who harried his father's "men servants and maid servants," and carried them off "with so many thousands of people" to be sold as slaves, and "scattered among many tribes even to the ultimate places of the earth." The raid which had apparently for object the securing of slaves and booty was, we may be certain, directed to a part of the

<sup>1</sup> The British Channel. It will be seen that the expeditions of our Irish kings against Britain were directed to the southern part of the island—the most populous, opulent, and peaceful.

country where these could be most easily secured in large numbers and great quantity, and conveniently carried off—and certainly not to the "Rock of Clyde" at the end of the Antonine Wall.

The circumstance that Patrick and the "men servants and maid servants" of his father's establishment were captured at the *villula* outside the town of his residence suggests that the raid took place at some season, probably the autumn, when the work of the farm was most intensive, and suggests that the youth, Patritius, was redeeming his unsatisfactory school reports by very competent supervision of agricultural operations. At all events his father does not seem to have been at the *villula* when the disaster happened; at least, he was not carried off into slavery, though a fate as hard may have befallen him.

Recent excavations of the Brito-Roman towns, Wroxeter, Chester, Caerleon, and Caerwent, point to a great catastrophe having overtaken these towns in or about A.D. 395,<sup>2</sup> and though this gives us a date ten years too early to fit in with the usually accepted chronology of St.

<sup>2</sup> Paper by Sir William Ridgeway (*Journal of Roman Studies*, XIV., 123) on "Niall of the Nine Hostages in connection with the treasures of Traprain Law and Ballinrees, and the destruction of Wroxeter, Chester, Caerleon and Caerwent." The evidence of the date is deduced from the latest dated Roman coins found there. Dr. Eoin MacNeill, however, points out that this is not absolutely exclusive of the possibility of the catastrophe having taken place later. "The great activity of the Irish, Picts and Saxons (between 395 and 405) may possibly explain why no imperial coins later than 395 should have reached the towns along the Deva—Venta Road."—*Native Place of St. Patrick*, p. 138.

Patrick's life, it is interpreted by Dr. Eoin MacNeill as "increasing the probability that St. Patrick's native place was on or near the Roman road that passed through these towns." It certainly points to the thoroughness with which the raiders carried out their job, and the force in which they mustered. And, as we shall see later, it would help to explain some puzzles that shall meet us in the further course of our saint's story.

Turning from conjecture (even that soundly based on archaeological *data*) to the firm ground of St. Patrick's own narrative, we shall learn from him what befell him, after he was thus violently torn from the comfortable and happy home of his boyhood and made to eat the bitter bread of slavery and exile.

"Now, after I came to Ireland, tending flocks was my daily occupation, and constantly I used to pray in the day-time. Love of God and the fear of Him increased more and more, and faith grew and the spirit was moved so that in one day I would say as many as a hundred prayers, and at night nearly as many [even] while I was out in the woods and on the mountain side. Before daybreak I used to be roused to prayer, in snow, in frost, in rain ; and I felt no hurt, nor was there any sluggishness in me—because, as I now see, the *Spirit was burning within me.*"<sup>3</sup>

St. Patrick does not tell us in what part of Ireland he spent the years of his captivity ; but both Muirchu<sup>4</sup> and Tirechán,<sup>5</sup> our earliest autho-

<sup>3</sup> *Conf.* 16

<sup>4</sup> Book I., 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Book of Armagh*, 17, 30.

ties (after himself) for his story place the scene of his bondage in the valley of the Braid and on the slopes of Sliabh Mis, and give us as the name of his master Miliucc Macchu Buain, the site of whose *dún* tradition seeks on the hill of Skerry, on the northern side of the Braid.

Until Professor Bury's "frank rejection" of this traditional connection of St. Patrick with Slemish, no one has ever questioned it; and it would take stronger arguments than Bury has put forward to make us go against an unbroken tradition, with a weight of nearly thirteen hundred years behind it.

Bury thinks that the place of our saint's bondage was near "the wood of Fochlut nigh to the western sea" whence, in after years, the voices came to the dreaming Patrick calling him back from the dear delights of home and kindred, "to walk once more amongst them."<sup>6</sup> Assuming (without proof) the wood of Fochlut to have stretched over Mayo to the western promontory of Murrisk, Bury supposes that "close to Crochan Aigle (Croagh Patrick) the mount which has been immemorially associated with Patrick's name, the British slave served his master for six years."<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Eoin MacNeill in order to save the Slemish tradition has advanced the very attractive thesis that the *Silva Focluti* (the Wood of Fochlut) of the *Book of Armagh* text of the *Confession*—whence the insistent voices came, even in his sleep, to St. Patrick's apostolic heart—was an

<sup>6</sup> *Conf.* 23.

<sup>7</sup> *St. Patrick*, p. 28.

emendation of an original *Silva Uluti*, the saint's own ungrammatical rendering of a place name represented by the modern Kilultagh (an Choill Ultach) "then a larger district than now on the eastern side of Lough Neagh, and the southern part of Co. Antrim"—including Slemish and stretching to the Irish Sea, which to a Briton born like Patrick would be "the Western Sea."<sup>8</sup>

Attractive as this thesis is, it is difficult to accept it definitely until it can be reconciled with the fact that both Muirchu and Tirechán (who presumably knew the situation and extent of "Kilultagh"—the former especially being very well up in Patrician topography in general, and the Patrician "places" in Dalaradia in particular) seem to have made the "voices" come from the western Fochlut Wood. It is true that Muirchu's "silvae focheitae"<sup>9</sup> occurring in the *Book of Armagh* text may be an emendation of the same scribe whom Dr. MacNeill makes responsible for the *Silvam Focluti* of the *Confession*. But the narrative in Tirechán makes it positively certain that the *silva focialt*<sup>10</sup> he had in his mind was in the territory of Enda, one of the sons of Amolngid, described as "from the Western regions, from the Plains of Domnon, and the Wood of Fochloth"—and therefore that in his case we are not dealing with any scribal emendation. St. Patrick is represented in this story as being at Tara, and actually engaged in

<sup>8</sup> MacNeill : *Silva Focluti* (R.I.A. Proceedings, XXXVI., c. 14).

<sup>9</sup> Muirchu I., 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Book of Armagh*, 20.

baptizing Erc. Two strangers are standing by, and our saint overhears a conversation between them, in which one of them, in answer to an enquiry from the other thus describes his name and quality : " Enda am I, son of Amolngid, son of Fiachra, son of Eochaíd, from the Western Regions, from the Plains of Domnon, and the Wood of Fochlot." The " wood of Fochloth "—the name is full of magic for St. Patrick. It is the place " by the western sea," whence the voices had been borne to him in his dreams—and immediately he hears that name our saint proposes to Enda to go with him when the young Prince is returning to Connacht, so that before his second Easter in Ireland, he should have answered " the cry of the children from beside the Western Sea."

Both Professor Bury, who boldly flying in the face of tradition rejects Sliabh Mis as the place of St. Patrick's captivity and transfers it to a *Silva Focluti* arbitrarily made extensive enough to take in the whole district from Killala to Croagh Patrick, and Professor MacNeill who, flying in the face of a tradition equally venerable, equates *Silva Focluti* with Kilultagh, and transfers it from the West to the North East, have assumed that our saint's captivity was all spent in one place, and under one master. I do not think we are bound to deduce this from St. Patrick's own expression in the *Confession*.<sup>11</sup> Speaking of his flight he says, " I left the man with whom I had been for six years." But that

<sup>11</sup> *Conf.* 17.

does not mean a single thing more than it says—viz., that he had been six years with one man. It does not exclude the possibility of his captivity in Ireland having lasted more than six years, nor of his having had more than one master. Indeed Tirechán cites the statement from the “book of Bishop Ultan,” that our saint had had “four masters,” and that Miliucc was the last of them.<sup>12</sup> And this Ardbraccan tradition is confirmed by the Sletty tradition, as embodied in the *Hymn of St. Fiacc*.<sup>13</sup> It is possible that some of his owners previous to Miliucc lived near the “Wood of Fochlut” near the Western Sea, and that there St. Patrick had met with the children whose voices exercised such a spell over his heart. That St. Patrick had been in Connacht in his early days seems to emerge from a story in the *Tripartite*.<sup>14</sup> This is the story of the “stone altar in an underground cave in Sliabh Ua-n-Ailella and the four chalices of glass at the four corners of it”; whose existence he revealed to Ailbe, and which would seem to have been known to St. Patrick himself from a previous familiarity with the place, where, with other Christian slaves, he may have secretly heard Mass.

Following Tirechán then, both for the location in Connacht of “Silva Focluti,” and for the location around Sliabh Mis of St. Patrick’s

<sup>12</sup> *B. of A.*, 17. It is true that the mention of “four masters” occurs in the mistaken attempt to translate the Goidelic form of the name Patricius, “Cothirthiacus,” as “the servant of four masters.”

<sup>13</sup> “Many were they he served, Cothraigé—servant of a four-fold household.” *Lib. Hymn.* II., 32.

<sup>14</sup> I., 95.

servitude during at least six years of it, let us learn something of what befell the young captive during that period.

In the first place the shock of misfortune led to a marvellous change of heart. The boy Patrick (or Succat) was, we may be certain, not half as black as he has been painted—by himself. He was, as we know from other evidence, singularly scrupulous ; and what were only the effects of the high spirits and carelessness of boyhood probably seemed to him, after his conversion, very serious faults. He had not been a diligent scholar—that is certain from his writings, and from his own rueful confession of lost opportunities “ coveting in old age what in youth he did not acquire because his sins prevented him.” It is probable that in a family such as his, “romanized” for several generations, “clerkly” for at least two, steady-going and highly “respectable,” in virtue of its possessions and curial dignity, the boy’s small aptitude for books roused much heart burning, and brought down on him many a paternal admonition. But he had learned more than he himself quite realised. For instance he had learned his prayers. “The prayers,” to quote Canon Newport White’s illuminating comment, “that he repeated in the land of his captivity, so fervently, and with an ever deepening sense of their meaning must have been learned at home.” This is saying far more than would be conveyed by the statement of a boy’s “knowing his prayers” nowadays. It probably meant that he knew by

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heart the whole *Psalter*, with its one hundred and fifty Psalms.

He knew too “the true God,” in spite of own agonized confession of ignorance of the Divinity ; and he turned to Him instinctively in his homesickness and trouble. Surely this passionate love of God which gives light and flame to the pages of the *Confession* was not a “new fire ” in his soul, struck, like the Easter Saturday’s spark, from the flint and tinder of a slave youth’s loneliness and sorrow. Rather does it reveal itself as bursting out into flame from some hidden “seed of fire,” that had long found shelter in his heart, planted there, perhaps, in childhood by the Gallic mother, Concessa. For though we know nothing at all about Concessa except her name and her Gaulish origin, it is probably not without reason that the ancient writers on St. Patrick have derived through her our saint’s “heredity ” of saintship, making him kin, through her, with the great saint, Martin of Tours. Great saints, like great men in general, usually have derived the qualities that have made them remarkable from their mothers, women who have given birth to them

“ with a double pang  
“ Of the body and the spirit.”

And so, we feel almost certain, has it been with St. Patrick and Concessa.

The “seed of fire” flamed out then in the boy’s soul, and in the light and glory of it the whole world was transformed. “This do I know

most surely that *before I was afflicted*, I was like a stone lying in the deep mire ; and *He that is mighty came*, and in His mercy lifted me up, and verily raised me aloft, and placed me on the top of the wall. And therefore I ought to cry aloud that I may also *render somewhat to the Lord* for his benefits which are so great both here and in eternity, the value of which the mind of man cannot estimate.''<sup>15</sup>

Many great mystics have tried to convey to us something of the rapturous sweetness of the Way of Union. But hardly anything seems to bring us nearer to that sublime secret than the "slow tongue" of our own saint Patrick when, in his old age, he tells us of his boyhood's initiation into its mysteries on the wintry slopes of Slemish. "Love of God and the fear of Him increased more and more, and faith grew, and the spirit was moved and before daybreak I used to be roused to prayer, in snow, in frost, in rain ; and I felt no hurt ; nor was there any sluggishness in me—because, as I now see, the Spirit was burning within me."

In later days when our people's love and veneration for St. Patrick brought them to Slemish as to a place of pilgrimage there was one spot, in particular, which they visited with great devotion. It is the mark on the neighbouring Skerry hill, now called "St. Patrick's Footmark." In Muirchu's time it was believed to have been left as a track of the Angel Victor's

<sup>15</sup> Conf. 12.

feet, ere he ascended into heaven after one of his visits to our herdsboy saint.

The scholiast on the *Hymn of Fiacc* also refers to this mark of angelic footsteps, on the Skerry hill, and tells us that "in the shape of a bird, angel Victor used to come to Patrick when he was herding the swine of Miliucc Maccu Buain in Arcal." At the time the scholiast wrote (11th century) there was a church on this spot, of which the vestiges still remain.

Other visitors, hardly less welcome than the Angel Victor himself sought out our boy saint on the holy hill of Slemish. Of these we have already spoken: the children of his master:

"Then used Miliucc's sons and daughters come to him with a ration, and he used to instruct them in Christian piety." These would be our Apostle's earliest conquests for Christ—and the gracious story which sets him in such affectionate relations with Irish children, also reminds us that St. Patrick's days of slavery were not all spent in solitude. Otherwise he would never have acquired such a good knowledge of the Irish language, as almost to supersede the familiarity with the Latin tongue of his childhood. Probably the system of *buailidheacht* ("boolying"), which Spenser was many centuries later so anxious to extinguish, was even then in vogue, and other herdsboys shared his watches with him, and helped him to build the leafy huts in which they lived all during the summer while the cattle, driven to the hills for their summer pasturage, ate the sweet mountain herbage, and kept the dairymaids in the

"mountain dairy" busy filling great hampers with butter, to be stored for winter supplies.

Of Miliucc, Patrick's master, there are varying accounts. Muirchu describes him as a "king, a heathen man and a harsh," and the scholiast on the *Hymn of Fiacc* and the *Tripartite* speaks of him as "king of northern Dalaradia." Tirechán, on the other hand, tells us he was a "magus" or druid.<sup>16</sup> Patrick, himself, describes him simply, without giving any name to him, as "the man with whom he had served six years."

Thus, then, in His own mysterious way, did God prepare our Apostle for his mission.

#### POSTSCRIPT TO CHAP. III.

A possible solution of some of the problems touched on in Chapters I. and III.—viz. (a) Why did St. Patrick land in Strangford Lough if his objective was Slemish? and (b) the location of the *Silva* whence came to Patrick in his dreams the insistent "voices," occurred to me after this book was written, and will be found in Appendix I.

<sup>16</sup> Muirchu I. 1; *Lib Hymn.* I., 98; Tir. (*B. of A.*, 30)

## *Chapter IV.—The Escape.*



F the manner of St. Patrick's escape from slavery, which took place after he had been six years with Miliucc all our knowledge is derived from his own account in the *Confession*.

One night, as he lay in the short slumber he allowed himself, he heard a Voice saying to him : “ Thou dost well to fast, thou who art soon to go to thy fatherland ”—an intimation that his fastings and prayers were about to be rewarded by a great favour from God. A few nights after the same mysterious Voice sounded in his ear with a further instalment of the divine message. This time it was a peremptory command to escape from Miliucc ; and it was conveyed with laconic terseness : “ Lo thy ship is ready.”<sup>1</sup>

In what port was that ship waiting for its God-appointed passenger, and by what route did Patrick reach it, and by what sign did he know it for his when he had come to it ? A story full of human, as well as mystic, interest lies behind the brief, broken sentences of the *Confession* ; and for this story, in its entirety, we would willingly sacrifice many a so-called classic.

All the saint himself tells us was that the port for which he was to sail was distant about two

<sup>1</sup> *Conf.* 17.

hundred miles from the place of his captivity ; and to reach it he probably followed the great northern road, the *Slige Midluachra*, which led from Dunseverick to Tara, and has left the echo of its name even in our own days to the district known as " the Route."<sup>2</sup> One cannot imagine the stranger youth even with his " voices " to guide him, striking across an unknown country when the high-way was there for his following. The direction of the great roads were all towards Tara : and therefore we may, I think, conclude that whatever port St. Patrick sailed from was on the east coast of Ireland. An ancient tradition, recorded in the *Tripartite*, and by the scholiast on the *Hymn of Fiacc*, makes the post of departure the mouth of the Boyne,<sup>3</sup> but this may have arisen from an erroneous reading of a phrase in the *Confession*. However, except for the fact that the Boyne is not two hundred miles from Slemish, there need be no difficulty about accepting the tradition. All St. Patrick tells us about it—except the distance from the place of his captivity—is that " he had never been there before, nor did he know anybody there" (which, incidentally, hints that he may have been in several parts of Ireland, and had acquaintances in more than one district). " And shortly thereafter I took flight, and left the man with whom I had been for six years, and I came in the strength of God, Who prospered my way for

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Eoin MacNeill in *Eriu* V., XI., P. I., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Conf.* 17. " Et veni in virtute Dei qui viam meam ad bonum derigebat." *Ad bonum* was read " *ad Boinum*," and interpreted " to the Boyne."

good, and I met nothing to alarm me until I reached that ship.”

It speaks well for the peaceable disposition, the charity and hospitality of our people in those far-off days, that this poor fugitive slave, without a penny to pay his way, should have met “with nothing to alarm him,” until he reached the port towards which his steps were directed. Not only must he have encountered no hostility, but he must have met with positive kindness—food, and shelter, and sure directions for the way, the while he made that long journey. A whole chapter on “Ancient Irish Civilization” is implicit in the laconic account of St. Patrick’s journey. It is certain that in no other country in the Europe of the time could such a flight have been effected in circumstances so happy.

Arrived at the port, and seeing with his own eyes the ship of his dreams, St. Patrick found refuge in a little hut, while he waited for the vessel to complete its load. He had just come in time; for on the very day he arrived the ship left its moorings. Without delay the young man asked the shipmaster to take him with them, probably offering to work his passage. But the fellow roughly and angrily refused with the churlish words: “On no account seek to come with us.”<sup>4</sup>

Sad at heart our Saint turned back to the hut where he was staying; and, as his custom was, he prayed as he went. His prayer was hardly ended, when he heard the voice of one

<sup>4</sup> *Conf.* 18.

of the sailors shouting after him : “ Come quickly, for these men are calling thee.” Straightway he returned to the boat, and found that the skipper and his crew were as eager to receive him now, as they had been prompt to turn him down at first. “ And they began to say to me : ‘ Come, for we receive thee in good faith ; make friends with us in any way thou desirest.’ ” They seem to have tried to enlist him formally into their company by some oath, or symbolic ceremony ; but the youth, realising that they were heathens, refused to accept initiation. Nevertheless he did not refuse their offer of a passage on their boat, hoping to win among them converts for Christ. This seems to be the meaning of his account of the transaction in the *Confession* (chap. 18). “ And so on that day I refused to suck their breasts, because of the fear of God ; but nevertheless I hoped that some of them would come into the faith of Christ, for they were heathen ; and on this account I continued with them ; and forthwith we set sail.”

The youth cannot have been long with the heathen crew when he discovered that he had exchanged one form of servitude for another. The very first night of the voyage he heard one of his “ voices ” in his dream saying, “ for two months thou shalt be with them.”<sup>5</sup> The divine assurance that this “ second captivity ” was only to have a limited duration must have given

<sup>5</sup> *Conf.* 21. Some confusion has been caused by what seems the insertion of this chapter in the wrong order in the narrative.

our Saint a stout heart for the hard things he had yet to endure.

The peaceable "trading vessel" was in truth, it seems, a pirate craft. Ostensibly its business in the Irish port where St. Patrick had first met it was to ship a cargo of Irish dogs. For the great Irish *cú*, which figures so picturesquely in Irish saga, was famous through all Europe, commanded enormous prices, and was looked on as a gift fit for a prince. But they were barely out of sight of land, when St. Patrick found that he was as much a slave to these men as he had ever been to Miliucc, when he tended his flocks on the slopes of Slemish. Probably they made him work hard looking after the dogs, and if he had hoped to be landed by them in some British port, whence he could make his way homewards, he was doomed to disappointment.

Whether of design, or through stress of weather, they did not make land for three days; and when they did land, instead of seeking some populous port they seem to have disembarked at the edge of a wild and desolate region, which St. Patrick calls "a desert." In this tractless waste they lost their way and wandered for twenty-eight days, almost dead from hunger, their provisions having failed them. Even the dogs could not hunt up any game, and great numbers of them had perished by the way.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Conf.* 19. At least they had "fainted and been left half-dead."

In these circumstances the shipmaster, though a heathen man, bethought himself, in his desperation, of trying to secure the help of the God of the Christians. "And one day," St. Patrick tells us, "the shipmaster began to say to me : ' How is this, O Christian ? Thou sayest that thy God is great and almighty ; wherefore then canst thou not pray for us, for we are in danger of starvation ? Hardly shall we ever see a human being again.' "

St. Patrick's beloved Master did not fail His servant at this crisis. Let us hear from the saint himself how the Lord hearkened to his prayer, and demonstrated that *He hath abundance everywhere*—even in the wild desert, where no living thing had yet revealed itself to them, or even to the powerful scent of the famous strain of hunting dogs.

" And by the help of God, so it came to pass. Lo, a herd of swine appeared in the way before our eyes, and they killed many of them ; and in that place they remained two nights ; and they were well refreshed, and their dogs were sated, for many of them had fainted, and were *left half dead* by the way.

" And after that they rendered hearty thanks to God, and I became honourable in their eyes ; and from that day on they had food in abundance. Moreover, they found wild honey, *and gave me a piece of it.* And one of them said : ' *This is offered in sacrifice.*' " The scrupulous youth thinking it had been immolated to some pagan

divinity, thereupon refused to taste it. “ Thanks be to God, I tasted none of it.”<sup>7</sup>

As he lay asleep that night, he had a strange nightmare, which made such an impression on him that he felt he would remember it all his life. “ When I was sleeping, Satan assailed me mightily in such sort as I shall remember *as long as I am in this body*. And he fell upon me as it were a huge rock, and I had no power over my limbs. But when did it occur to me—to my ignorant mind—to call upon Elias? And on this I saw the sun rise in the heavens, and while I was shouting ‘ Elias ’ with all my might, lo, the splendour of that sun fell upon me, and straight-way shook all weight from off me. And I believe that I was helped by Christ my Lord, and that His spirit was even then calling aloud on my behalf. And I trust that it will be so *in the day of my trouble*, as He saith in the Gospel: *In that day, the Lord testifieth, it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*”<sup>8</sup>

From that day, though it was another fortnight before St. Patrick and his companions reached the abodes of men, they suffered no privations: “ God provided for us on our journey food and fire and dry quarters every day, until on the fourteenth day we reached human habitations.”<sup>9</sup> A little after this (a fortnight it would be, to make

<sup>7</sup> Conf. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Conf. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Conf. 22.

up the "sixty days" of his dream)<sup>10</sup> our Saint effected his escape from his captors. And so ended his "second captivity."

In what country were these strange adventures staged? St. Patrick himself gives us no direct answer to this question. But most of his modern biographers have deduced from the available data, that it was in some part of Gaul that could be reached in the three days' sail from the Irish port mentioned in the *Confession* (19). The "desert" through which he and his companions wandered for four weeks they identify with those regions of Gaul which had been laid "palm-bare" by the devastating bands of Vandals, Suevi, Alans, and Burgundians, who, bursting into Gaul on the last night of the year 406, had remained there for three terrible years, burning towns, villages, and farmhouses, laying waste the cultivated lands, slaying the inhabitants until one poet victim exclaimed that if "the whole ocean had poured its waters into the fields of Gaul, its vasty waves would have spared more than the invaders."

Wherever St. Patrick landed, and in whatever desolate regions in Gaul his second captivity was spent, it seems to me, very reasonable to suppose that when he escaped from his captors after the prophesied "sixty nights" he would make his way to his mother's relatives in Tours. Perhaps some of his own family were there at

<sup>10</sup> *Conf.* 21. Three days of the voyage, twenty-eight days of wandering in the "desert," a fortnight of a more comfortable journey, leave fifteen nights still to be reached before the "sixty" are reached.

the time, for if the raid in which he himself was captured was as thorough as his own words in the *Confession* and the results of recent archaeological "diggings" have tended to show, those of them who escaped with their lives and liberty were likely to have been obliged to leave Britain for a period ; though, as our saint's own narration shows, they were to be found in it again, possibly when the British "rally" under Cunedda and his conquering sons raised a new power on the ruins of the Roman system.

In Tours, then, following a tradition enshrined in the *Tripartite*<sup>11</sup> and the *Life* by Probus,<sup>12</sup> we must next seek the tracks of St. Patrick's feet in the long "journeymanship" which was to be the preparation for his God-appointed mission to the Irish race. And at Tours he was to come under an influence which was to have an enormous effect on him, and through him on the spiritual development and destiny of the Irish people.

That influence was monasticism, of which St. Martin was the pioneer in Gaul. St. Martin himself was dead when St. Patrick escaped from captivity. But in the "Great Monastery" (Marmoutier) he had founded two miles outside of Tours, his spirit still lived on in the band of monks—eighty or more—who had learned from the "soldier-priest" to live, while yet on earth, the life of angels. And the immortal work of Sulpicius Severus, the *Vita Sancti Martini*, was

<sup>11</sup> *Tript.* I., 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Trias Thaumaturga*, p. 48.

in everybody's hands to paint that life in all its austere but irresistible loveliness. We can imagine the effect that book, falling into Patrick's hands, must have had on him to whom Christ had revealed His secrets on the snowy slopes of Slemish, and how eagerly the young man sought the places which Martin had sanctified, and how eagerly he desired to become one of the Brethren. As ever, Aubrey de Vere has caught marvellously the glow and rapture of our Irish Apostle's first contact with the great Saint of Tours—and what he stood for—

“ To Tours I turned my face  
 There where in years gone by Thy soldier-priest,  
 Martin, had ruled, my kinsman in the flesh.  
 Dead was the lion ; but his lair was warm :  
 In it I laid me, and a conquering glow  
 Rushed up into my heart. Discourse I heard  
 Of Martin still, his valour in the Lord,  
 His rugged warrior zeal, his passionate love  
 For Hilary, his vigils, and his fasts  
 And all his pitiless warfare on the Powers  
 Of Darkness ; and one day in secrecy  
 With Ninian, missioned then to Alba's shore,  
 I peered into his branch-enwoven cell,  
 Half-way between the river and the rocks  
 From Tours a mile and more.”<sup>13</sup>

Traditions of St. Patrick's residence at Marmoutier are still very vivid, and one of the rock-

<sup>13</sup> *Legends of St. Patrick*, p. 219. Aubrey de Vere has shown that he, too, has read Sulpicius Severus to good purpose—for the whole history of the soldier bishop of Tours is compressed into those few lines.

hewn cells wrought in the stony face of the steep escarpment above the Loire is still pointed out as his.

St. Augustine has told us, in that magnificent chapter of the *Confessions* which describes the beginning of his own conversion, of the extraordinary effect produced on certain chosen souls when monasticism was first revealed to them. He himself and his friend Alipius learned of it by a chance visit to their house in Milan of an official of the imperial court called Pontitianus. Finding on Augustine's table, to his surprise, a copy of St. Paul's *Epistles*, the visitor, a devout Christian, " took occasion, in the course of his speech, to discourse unto us of Antony, the Egyptian monk, whose name was excellently famous amongst Thy servants, but for us we had never heard of him until that hour . We, on the other hand, were amazed to hear that so lately, and almost in our own days, such wonderful things had been wrought by Thee, in the true faith and the Catholic Church.

" From this Pontitianus went on to speak of the teeming monasteries, and of those who are a sweet savour unto Thee, and of the fruitful bosom of the barren desert, whereof also we had heard nothing. Nay more, there was a monastery at Milan full of holy brethren, close without the wall of the city, under the fostering care of Ambrose, and yet we knew nothing of it."

Thus, of the thing with which his heart was full —the lure of monasticism—did Pontitianus make discourse ; but the climax was reached when he

told of an experience of his own when he was at the Imperial Court at Trèves. One day, when the Emperor was at the games in the circus, a party of four high court officials, of whom Pontitianus himself was one, went for a walk in some gardens outside the city wall. They got separated into two parties, Pontitianus and a companion going in one direction, and the other pair in another. The latter came by chance on a monastery—though they did not recognise the poor, small cottage as such—and entering in picked up a book which one of them began to read. It was the *Life of St. Anthony* by Athanasius, the book which had revealed to the West the glory of Eastern monasticism, and as the court official turned over its pages, a great longing seized him to get away from the petty intrigues and jealousies of the court, to embrace the pure and innocent life described in the book, where nothing came between the soul and its Creator. He turned to his companion with an outpouring of questions, to which the reading of the book gave rise in his mind. “Whither do our labours tend?” said he, “and what do we pursue? What higher hope have we than to become the friends of the Emperor? And with what peril is that striving fraught? Now, from this very moment we have the opportunity to become the friends of God.” He took up the book again, and his soul was converted, and his spirit renounced the world. He read on, and his heart swelled with tumultuous emotions. He hesitated a moment, groaning and trembling, the while he debated the matter

with himself. Then he made his decision, and turning to his friend said : " It is settled ; I renounce my worldly aspirations ; I want to serve God—and Him only—and from this very moment." His friend was won over at the same time ; and there and then the two imperial officials, renouncing wealth, and domestic felicity, and high position, asked for admittance into the monastery. When Pontitianus and his companions rejoined them, it was only to hear of their decision, and to take leave of them weeping. But their tears were for themselves—not for the two " who had chosen the better part."<sup>14</sup>

Such being the effect of the monastic ideal on brilliant men of the world, we can imagine how it seized on Patrick's soul, which already, in the solitudes of Irish woods and mountains, had tasted of the ineffable joys of prayer. Here was a life of which prayer was the one business ; and how deliciously Sulpicius Severus has painted it, as it was lived in that aerial monastery above the Loire, where the monks, laying aside the heavy burden of the world's ambitions, luxuries and possessions, were as free, and happy, and as lightly poised on earth as the winged birds, in whose company they nested. " They had nothing of their own, everything in common. They bought nothing ; they sold nothing. They took their food together—one meal in the afternoon. They never tasted wine except in sickness. They were clothed in rough garments. They

<sup>14</sup> *Confessions of St. Augustine.* Book VIII., chapters 6, 7, and 8.

seldom left their cells except to go to the oratory. The elders gave themselves exclusively to prayer ; the younger were also employed as copyists. And these austeries were joyfully borne by men of noble birth, brought up in luxury ; but now, of their own accord, they had bound themselves to this life of poverty and privation.”<sup>15</sup>

Such was the celebrated “ *Magnum Monasterium* ” of St. Martin outside Tours, where, according to a venerable tradition, Patrick was first challenged by the monastic ideal. But God did not allow him to follow at once its appeal. His Will was to recall him to his own fatherland, and there to deliver to him the message He had for him.

<sup>15</sup> Sulpicius Severus : *Vita S. Martini*.

## *Chapter V.—The Call.*



AFTER the departure of the Roman officials from Britain in A.D. 410, the Britons, many of whom had served in the Roman army, called upon to undertake their own defence, set about it very promptly and efficiently. In the place of the Roman "Dux Britanniarum" arose a series of native soldier rulers, who, on the ruins of the imperial polity, as it applied to the "Britains," succeeded in establishing a new social, military, and political *régime*.

The first of these native leaders whom we can trace is the celebrated Cunedag or Cunedda, famous in Welsh literature. Rhys<sup>1</sup> deduces from the Welsh tradition, which makes his mother a daughter of Ceol, that his own place of origin was in Kyle, in the present county of Ayr. The same authority considers that the Roman names in his ancestry—Aeternus, Paternus, Tacitus—show he may have had Roman blood in his veins, and that some of his forbears had worn the official purple. His grandfather Paternus, or Patern, is always referred to in the Welsh pedigrees as Peisrudd, the "man of the red tunic."

He had a large family of warrior sons, one of

<sup>1</sup> *Celtic Britain*, p. 118.

whom, Caredig is of particular interest to us ; for it is almost certain that he is the Coroticus against whom St. Patrick wrote his famous *Epistle*.<sup>2</sup>

With his own good sword and those of his numerous sons and grandsons Cunedda carved out a fair sized kingdom for himself and his descendants, and from his court in Carlisle ruled as Gwledig—exercising the power of the Roman Dux Britanniarum and wearing that official's " belt of gold," which has passed into Welsh poetry as " Cunedda's girdle." Nine hundred horse held " the Wall " (i.e., Hadrian's Wall) for him ; and his power extended towards the east as far as Caerwier (Wearmouth), while his sons and grandsons brought Wales into subjection and ruled in the districts which have retained their names : Merrion (his grandson) in Merioneth, and Caredig (or Coroticus) in Cardiganshire, while the rule of their father as Gwledig was recognised as far as the estuary of the Severn.

It was in the British rally of which Cunedda was the leader that we may assume St. Patrick's relatives were recalled to Britain—if, as seems likely, they had been obliged to fly, when their town, and the towns along the Roman road from Caerwent to Wroxeter were laid waste by the Irish invaders, in the raid where Patrick and " so many thousands " of his countrymen and countrywomen were carried off into slavery. At all events, at this point in our saint's story we

<sup>2</sup> This identification was first suggested by Zimmer. It has been rejected by Bury (*St. Patrick*, p. 315), but without any reason stated.

find him back with his relatives (*parentes*, he calls them) in his own country, and these relatives restored to a position of wealth and importance, which would go to show that the ruin wrought in the family fortunes by the fatal raid had been fully made good. I suggest as very probable that the head of the family occupied an important position in the new state of which Cunedda and his sons were the chiefs.

But here again from conjecture we must turn to the certainty of the information given by St. Patrick himself in his *Confession*.<sup>3</sup>

" And again, after a few years,<sup>4</sup> I was in Britain with my kindred, who received me as a son, and earnestly besought me that at all events now, after the great tribulation I had undergone, I would not depart from them any whither."

Perhaps the young man himself would have been willing enough to hearken to his relatives' pleading, and to settle down in the comfort and respectability which his people enjoyed. But God had marked him for a greater if more sorrowful destiny—to be the Apostle of Eire, and " to redeem from captivity the people whom he had formerly served as a captive."

" For now when perils past, I walked secure  
Kind greetings round me, and the Christian  
Rite,

There rose a clamorous yearning in my heart  
And memories of that land so far, so fair,

<sup>3</sup> *Conf.* 23.

<sup>4</sup> He is said to have spent four years in St. Martin's monastery at Tours (*Probus, loc. cit.*)

And lost in such a gloom. And through that gloom

The eyes of little children shone on me,  
So ready to believe. Naked of old  
Such children saw I, in and out the waves  
Dancing in circles upon Erin's shores  
Like creatures never fallen.<sup>5</sup>

With such memories and yearnings were his days filled, and his night's rest was broken by the importunity of pleading voices : " And there indeed *I saw in the night visions* one whose name was Victoricus coming as it were from Ireland with letters innumerable. And he gave me one of them, and I read the beginning of the letter, which was entitled ' The Voice of the Irish ' ; and while I was reading aloud the beginning of the letter, I thought that at that very moment I heard the voice of them who lived beside the Wood of Fochlut which is nigh unto the Western Sea. And thus they cried as with one mouth ' We beseech thee, holy youth to come and walk among us once more.' And I was exceedingly *broken in heart* and could read no more. And so I awoke."<sup>6</sup>

It was thus his missionary vocation was revealed to our saint ; and the dear Master Who called him comforted him by letting him know that He Himself would be with His servant in all that he would have to do and endure for the Irish people :

<sup>5</sup> Aubrey de Vere : *Legends of St. Patrick*, p. 217-8.

<sup>6</sup> Conf. 23.

" And another night, whether within me or beside me *I know not*, *God knoweth*, in most admirable words which I heard and could not understand, except that at the end of the prayer He thus affirmed, ' He Who *laid down His life for thee*, He it is Who speaketh in thee.' And so I awoke, rejoicing.

" And another time I saw Him praying within me, and I was as it were within my body ; and I heard [One praying] over me, that is over *the inner man*, and there He was praying mightily with groanings. And meanwhile I was astonished, and was marvelling and thinking who it could be that was praying within me ; but at the end of the prayer he affirmed that He was the Spirit. And so I awoke, and I remembered how the Apostle saith, *the Spirit helpeth the infirmities of our prayer, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, which cannot be expressed in words.* And again, The Lord our Advocate maketh intercession for us."<sup>7</sup>

With the help of the Crucified Christ, of " the Spirit Who maketh intercession for us with groaning," Patrick determined to devote his life to the conversion of the Irish. But before he could do aught to follow the Call he heard so plainly, there were many difficulties to be overcome.

The first was his own lack of education. He had, as he repeats again and again, neglected

<sup>7</sup> *Conf.* 25.

the opportunities of his boyhood ; and during the years of his servitude, he had almost forgotten the Latin speech of his home, and, amid menial tasks, lost the memory of whatever "bookish knowledge" he had acquired in his unsatisfactory schooldays, almost in spite of himself. He knew enough about the Irish to realise that no ignorant man would be fit for the Mission to that highly cultured, intellectual people ; and so, altogether apart from what might be called the "professional" studies, in Theology, Canon Law, Scriptures, etc., there was a very real need in his case for a specially intensive course in intellectual training to be undergone by the inissionary aspirant. Now for a man in the later twenties, as we must reckon Patrick's age at this period, that was not an easy thing to get—especially in Britain.

Whom did he consult at this period ? And was the Victoricus of his dream something more in the drama of his life than "a phantom of the night" ?

In answer to the question who was "this man called Victoricus," whom Patrick saw in his *night visions* "coming as it were from Ireland with letters innumerable," our Irish ancestors declare it was the Angel Victor, or as Muirchu<sup>8</sup> calls him "that ancient and very trusty one, named Victoricus," who used to visit the slave boy on Slemish, bearing from God messages of "what was to come to pass." But it seems certain that it was a human being, and probably

<sup>8</sup> Muirchu I., 1, 7, 11.

some one whose acquaintance our saint had made in Gaul. Lanigan throws out the suggestion that it might have been the famous St. Victoricus (or Victricius),<sup>9</sup> Bishop of Rouen, friend of St. Martin of Tours, and friend and correspondent of St. Paulinus of Nola, from whose *Letters* Monsieur l'Abbé Vacandard has drawn much of the material for his admirable monograph<sup>10</sup> on the saintly Rouenais Bishop in "*Les Saints*" series. We know that the great missionary Bishop, who, not content with the work afforded him by his own diocese had undertaken repeatedly very laborious but fruitful campaigns among the Morini and the Nervii (around Boulogne and all through the modern Brabant and Flanders) was invited at one period of his life by the Bishops in Britain to come and settle some religious troubles which for a time disturbed the British Church. His visit to Britain (of which some writers think he was a native) may have coincided with the period of St. Patrick's sojourn with his relatives. And as he could easily, in view of the Bishop of Rouen's close relations with Marmoutier, have known Victoricus in Gaul, is it any wonder if his dreams were haunted by the thought of the great missionary, and that side by side with that apostolic figure he should invoke the forms of the Irish friends of his youth calling out for *their* missionary?

If St. Victoricus of Rouen were the Victoricus of St. Patrick's dream one would be tempted to

<sup>9</sup> *Ecclesiastical History*, I., p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> *St. Victrice*, Paris, 1903, pp. 123, 127.

seek in the clue thus furnished some guidance for the difficult tasks with which the historian of the Irish Apostle finds himself faced, when he tries to deduce, from the conflicting accounts of the old *Lives*, where Patrick spent the years that intervened between his escape from captivity and his arrival in Ireland as a Bishop.

Of these years his *Confession* tells us practically nothing. But in one of the *dicta* ascribed to the saint in the *Book of Armagh*, he speaks of himself as having had "the fear of God as a guide for his journeying through Gaul and Italy and in the islands which are in the Tyrrhenian Sea." If the Victoricus of the dream was Saint Victoricus of Rouen, the friend and correspondent of St. Paulinus of Nola, it is tempting to conjecture that Victoricus, consulted by St. Patrick about his vocation, and the difficulties that opposed it, brought him back with him to Gaul, and thence to Rome (where St. Victoricus was called by the Pope towards the end of his life) sending him thence to Paulinus of Nola :—

" He brought him over all the Alps—great God  
 it was a marvel of a course  
 So that he left him with Germanus in the south,  
 in the southern part of Latium."<sup>11</sup>

If we could venture to substitute "Paulinus" for "Germanus" in the text of the *Hymn of Fiacc* (and some other name must be substituted

<sup>11</sup> *Hymn of Fiacc*.

for the sake of historical accuracy, Germanus of Auxerre being still a layman at this time, and never having his residence "in the south, in the southern part of Latium") our difficulties in following "the journeyings" of St. Patrick through Gaul and Italy would be overcome. For the rôle assigned by the *Hymn of Fiacc* to Germanus<sup>12</sup> could be perfectly filled (both as to place, time and fitness) by the great Saint Paulinus of Nola, who at the very moment in question was drawing the eyes of the Christian world to the retreat he had made for himself, and his Spanish wife, Theresia, in the little Campanian city where St. Felix had won his martyr's crown.

From that retreat, the former pupil of the great contemporary poet, Ausonius (in his native Bordeaux), who had, to the indignation of his preceptor, given up his senatorial rank, and divided among the poor estates great enough to be reckoned as "kingdoms" ("regna") kept up a lively correspondence with all the most distinguished churchmen and Christian men of letters of the day: with St. Augustine and Alipius, with St. Jerome and St. Melania, with Sulpicius Severus, whose *Vita Sancti Martini* was its "best-seller"; with Saint Victoricus of Rouen who in addition to being a great missionary bishop was a valued writer (his *De Laude Sanctorum* being the best known of his works), and

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the Germanus meant was not the Bishop of Auxerre (418—448), but the Germanus who was the friend and companion of Cassian, the great monastic legislator, in his visits to the Thebaid, and subsequently at Rome and Marseilles.

especially with St. Honoratus and the "saints," who at that time were making famous the Island of Lérins, before they should be compelled to take up the burden of the episcopacy in the great cities of Gaul, which were presently to come to Lérins clamouring, as it were, for bishops. We find in the *Letters* of St. Paulinus that monks from Saint Honoratus's island monastery sometimes were sent with letters and messages to Saint Paulinus of Nola, and the names of Gelasius, Oyandus and Tigridis are mentioned in this connection.

If in his "journeyings through Italy," of which our Apostle himself speaks in the *dictum* quoted, he had been for a time the guest of St. Paulinus of Nola in that retreat near the tomb of St. Felix at Nola, where Paulinus and his wife Theresia extended hospitality to so many pilgrims, it is easy to understand how our Irish Apostle should pass from Nola to the "islands of the Tyrrhenian Sea," and especially to Lérins, where we must next seek him. Curiously enough the "St. Patrick of Nola" (whom Colgan identified with one of the three "Patricks" the *Tripartite*<sup>13</sup> speaks of as found by our St. Patrick "in a cavern between the mountain and the [Tyrrhenian] sea") has the same feast day as our Apostle, and is identified by Ferrarius with him. This fact is interesting as showing a traditional connection of St. Patrick with Nola.

But that is, after all, a shadowy tradition. We feel we are on surer ground when we come to

<sup>13</sup> *Tripl.* I., 27.

Lérins, where under the guidance of St. Honoratus, and in company with his disciples, many of whom were not only great saints, but the foremost thinkers, scholars and men of letters, of their day, our saint took up his long interrupted studies, and prepared for the priesthood, and that Irish mission of which his faithful heart, through all the weary years of waiting, never "let go" the longing and the dream—

" Towards Ireland God's angels were bringing  
him back  
Often was it seen in visions that he would come  
again."<sup>14</sup>

Nine years most of the *Lives* which mention it, speak of St. Patrick as spending in Lérins described by them under various terms.<sup>15</sup> We must learn something of this island, and of the illustrious men who found in it a prayerful and studious retreat from the storms and deceptions of the world, if we would understand aright some future happenings in our saint's story.

<sup>14</sup> *Hymn of Fiacc.*

<sup>15</sup> Thus in the *Lives* published by Colgan in the *Trias Thau.*: "In insula Aralensi" (*Vita Sec.*); "ad Tamarensem Insulam" (*V. Tertia*): "Arelatensis Insula," V. 4; Probus calls the monks of Honoratus: "hermits," "bare-footed solitaries," "island monks."

## *Chapter VI.—In the Island of Lérins.*



OME time about A.D. 410, when St. Patrick was still guarding Miliucc's herds amid the wooded solitudes of Dalaradia, two young men of great fortune and belonging to one of the noblest families in the Empire "sold all they had," abandoned home and friends, and career, and possessions to seek the pearl beyond price which St. Athanasius had taught the men of the West to look for amid the solitaries of the Thebaïd. They were Honoratus and his brother, Venantius, and they had for their guide a monk grown grey in the warfare of Christ, called Caprasius.

The death of Venantius on the journey caused a change in the plans of Honoratus. Instead of proceeding to Egypt to take his place in the Thebaïd, he fulfilled the plans of Providence by endowing with a new Thebaïd the West. On the invitation of the Bishop of Fréjus, Saint Leontius, he took up his abode at Capo Rosso, near Fréjus, in a cavern hollowed out in the side of the mountain that towers above the lovely blue of the Mediterranean Sea.

But the solitude Honoratus sought was denied him by the crowds of people who daily came to the place of his abiding to seek his prayers, and

counsel, and to edify themselves at the spectacle of the saintly life led by himself and Caprasius and the companions who had joined them. At this juncture the kind Bishop of Fréjus proposed to the solitaries that they should take up their abode in the desert island of Lérins ; and in spite of the condition of the island at the time, covered as it was with wild growths that left no space for culture, full of venomous serpents (that came out of their holes when the strong winds and high tides sent the waves dashing over the rocks), and wanting in the first essential of life, a well of wholesome water, the proposition was accepted—and a new chapter in the history of Europe began.

At the prayer of Saint Honoratus a fountain gushed forth from the arid rock ; by the incessant labours of the Brethren's hands the wild brushwood gave way to cultivated fields and gardens, and at last the desert blossomed like the rose, and became the lovely place of which one of its happy inhabitants, St. Eucherius, has given us the enchanting picture in his *De Laude Eremi* : " O wondrous glory of the desert that Satan, who in the earthly paradise was conqueror, should in thee be conquered. How delightful to minds athirst for God those lovely wooded mountain slopes. But amongst them all I hold especially dear Lérins . . . fresh and cool with sparkling waters, glowing and perfumed with the beauty and fragrance of flowers. . . . What gatherings of saints have I seen in that desert. Precious vessels that shed around them, as it were, a

fragrance exceeding sweet and the odour of eternal life."

The man who wrote those exquisite lines, Saint Eucherius (afterwards Bishop of Lyons, and described by a distinguished authority as "the greatest of the great pontiffs of his day") had left all that the world holds dearest, a great social and official position, immense wealth and enormous estates, and taken up his abode with his wife Galla (become to him as a sister) and their two boys, Salonius and Veranus, in an island near Lérins, called Léro (now Sainte Marguerite). Afterwards, for the education of his boys and others that came to the islands, a school was inaugurated in Lérins of which Eucherius was one of the most distinguished teachers.

In that school<sup>1</sup> other notable men dispersed the treasures of their piety, learning and wisdom : Saint Vincent of Lérins, the foremost controversialist of his time, author of the *Commonitorium Peregrini*; Salvianus, after St. Augustine the most eloquent man of his century, who has left us an imperishable picture of the break-up of the old régime in his *Gubernatio Dei*; Saint Hilary, the kinsman and disciple of Saint Honoratus, his successor in the See of Arles, and the author of that funeral panegyric on his Master (*Sermo de Vita S. Honorati*) which is our chief authority for the history, not only of St. Honoratus himself,

<sup>1</sup> This account of Lérins and its "saints" is based on documents quoted in Alliez : *Histoire du Monastère de Lérins* (Paris : 1862).

but of the monastery he founded, and the men who made it illustrious.

So anxious had St. Honoratus been to win his cousin, Hilary, for Christ that he left his retreat for a time, and made a journey to his native place in the north of Gaul to persuade the young noble to join the happy band in Lérins. At first Hilary would not hear of such a thing ; but the prayers of St. Honoratus prevailed, and after a struggle between "the old man and the new" which Hilary himself has described with a moving eloquence, and a fine psychology, Honoratus returned to his saintly isle with his noble prey.

He had won a double victory. Pimeniola, the sister of Hilary, had been happily married for about seven years to a young barrister of noble birth, called Lupus, when St. Honoratus, her cousin, paid his memorable visit to his native place. The description the saint gave of the joys of monastic life affected profoundly both husband and wife. They determined, henceforth, to live for God. Pimeniola associated herself with other holy women ; and Lupus followed his brother-in-law, Hilary, to Lérins, bringing with him his brother, Vincent. Both of these men were destined to become bishops ; Lupus was consecrated Bishop of Troyes, and Vincent, Bishop of Saintes.

It was not only the great nobles and distinguished professional men of Gaul who were attracted to Lérins. Saint Hilary, in a famous passage, describes St. Honoratus as holding the

arms of his charity always open as if to invite all Christians to rest upon his bosom, that is to say in the charity of Christ ; and in another passage he tells how from all parts there came to him refugees flying from the enormous misery of that war-wasted world.

Even from Britain there came a young man, Faustus, who was to rise to a great dignity in Lérins, of which he was to be the third Abbot (431—461), and afterwards to succeed its second Abbot, Maximus (426—431) as Bishop of Riez. Faustus had had a very different story from Patrick. His youth had been spent in the schools, whence, after brilliant studies, he was called to the bar, and won great forensic triumphs through his eloquence and ability. The prayers of his mother, a very pious lady, had, however, won him over to her own philosophy of life ; and turning his back on the world and all its glittering baubles, he sought the one thing that matters among the Brethren in Lérins.

Did St. Patrick know Faustus in their common British homeland ; and was it, perchance, through Faustus that our Apostle came to Lérins to take up his long-interrupted studies for the priesthood ? One hardly dares to frame a conjecture on that point—lest perhaps the suspicion would follow, which would identify Faustus with the disloyal friend who, “ after thirty years ” betrayed, in order to have Patrick recalled from the Irish mission, the confidence reposed in him by the young man, on the eve of his ordination to the deaconship, torn with scruples over a

boyish fault committed long ago in youthful ignorance.<sup>2</sup>

All the writers who have mentioned St. Patrick's sojourn in the *Insula Arelensis*<sup>3</sup> fix it at about nine years. Nine happy years they must have been, for St. Honoratus shed all around him an atmosphere of the sweetest charity and peace. St. Hilary has described the Abbot's care for his flock : " With what prudent affection he watched over each and all, to see that none should be overwhelmed with labours, none languish in idleness. In his tender charity he measured, so to speak, the sleep, energies, dispositions and constitutions of each, urging on the strong, and moderating those whose strength was only in their wills. . . He was always concerned to make sweet and light the Yoke of Christ, to repel whatever of evil might have been caused by the devil."

Under this master, then, St. Patrick took his " advanced " lessons in the Science of the Saints, the first knowledge of which Christ Himself had imparted to him in many a lonely day in Irish woods, and many a stormy dawn on Slemish. At the same time in the monastery school, with Veranus, Salonius, the sons of St. Eucherius, and other youths, our saint, now grown to mature manhood, tried to make up for the literary deficiencies, which the carelessness of his boyhood and the misfortunes of his youth

<sup>2</sup> *Conf.* 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Tripartite* I., 26. It seems to me very likely that the name arose from a confused tradition of St. Patrick's sojourn both in Lérins and at Arles.

had imposed on him. He seems to have met with poor enough success in these latter studies —which is not to be wondered at considering his history ; but he learned admirably the lessons of asceticism which Lérins furnished ; and he read and re-read the Scriptures, until the words of Holy Writ came every moment to his lips, when his “ slow tongue ” struggled to give utterance to the deep thoughts of his heart.

Capo Rosso, on the mainland, where St. Honoratus had lived for a period before he came to Lérins, was still retained for those of his monks who, from time to time, wished to seek a solitude even greater than that afforded by the *Coenobium*. This privilege was granted only to those monks who distinguished themselves by the ardours of their sanctity, and their zeal in the attainment of perfection. There is good reason to believe that St. Patrick was among those thus favoured. And this would explain what Probus says when (to the puzzle of all future biographers of the saint) he speaks of our Apostle as being for a time with “ the island monks between the mountain and the sea.” This would exactly describe the position of those monks who left the islands, for a time, for a “ retreat ” in the cavern-hermitages on the face of Capo Rosso—“ between the mountain and the sea.”

In 426 an event of great importance occurred in the history of Lérins, when the people of Arles demanded Saint Honoratus for their bishop. Already a bishop had been chosen from that

island, when St. Lupus, who, as we have seen, had followed his brother-in-law, Hilary, into that retreat had been "captured" at Macon, and forced by the people of Troyes to become their *episcopus*. Lupus had merely intended to leave the island for a short time, in order to dispose of his possessions, and to distribute the proceeds among the poor, and when news came to the Brethren that he was not to return to them there was much lamentation.

But this was nothing to their grief, a short time later, when at the insistent demand of the clergy and people of Arles, the monks of Lérins saw themselves deprived of their founder and father—St. Honoratus. Most unwillingly he left them—and only when it was made plain to him that the call to Arles was the call of God.

The Church of Arles occupied, at that time, a very important position in the ecclesiastical polity of the Western World. Since Constantine had made the Empire Christian—in name at least—the administrative divisions of the Catholic Church (the State Church—it is important to remember that) were determined by the political "circonscriptions." Now in the imperial administration the Empire was divided into four great "Prefectures," of which the fourth, the Prefecture of Gaul (under a great imperial official the *Praefectus Praetorio Galliae*) comprised three sub-divisions called *Dioceses*; each under a *Vicarius*. *Diocesis I.*, *Hispania*, again divided into seven *Provinces*; *Diocesis II.*, "Septem

*Provinciae* " ;<sup>4</sup> *Diocesis III.*, *Britanniae* (divided into five Provinces; *Maxima Caesariensis*, *Valentia*, *Britannia Prima*, *Britannia Secunda*, *Flavia Caesariensis*).

The administrative capital of this Prefecture was for a time at Treves, but when Treves fell into the power of the Franks, it was transformed to Arles. From this city, then, at the date we have now reached, the *Praefectus Praetorio Galliae* ruled, in the name of the Emperor of the West, whatever of the *Prefectura Galliae* was left to the Roman Empire; and side by side with him, acting on behalf of the Co-arb of Peter as the imperial dignitary did for the Emperor, the Bishop of Arles exercised in *spiritualibus* the functions of Vicar of the Pope in the lands comprised in the Prefecture of Gaul—even those which had recently thrown off the imperial yoke.

This dignity, great as it was, had not brought peace to the Church of Arles. Indeed, Patroculus, the Bishop whom Honoratus was called on to succeed, had perished by a violent death, and his episcopacy had been filled with quarrels, the echoes of which reach us in the Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine, who was an ardent partisan of Eros, the dispossessed Bishop whom Patroculus had replaced, and in consequence, a

<sup>4</sup> In reality they numbered seventeen: 1, *Viennensis*; 2, *Lugdunensis Prima*; 3, *Germania Prima*; 4, *Germania Secunda*; 5, *Belgica Prima*; 6, *Belgica Secunda*; 7, *Alpes Maritimiae*; 8, *Alpes Penninae et Graiae*; 9, *Maxima Sequanorum*; 10, *Aquitania Prima*; 11, *Aquitania Secunda*; 12, *Novempopuli*; 13, *Narbonensis Prima*; 14, *Narbonensis Secunda*; 15, *Lugdunensis Secunda*; 16, *Lugdunensis Tertia*; 17, *Lugdunensis*.

bitter opponent of Patroculus. Thus the affairs of the Church of Arles were a subject of division in the highest ecclesiastical circles, and it was necessary that after the assassination of Patroculus, to heal the festering wounds, a new Bishop should be found, who was a saint, a man of administrative ability, of intellectual eminence and of striking personality. All these qualities were united in St. Honoratus.

There is reason to believe that when Honoratus left the beloved island of Lérins, among those who accompanied him to Arles was St. Patrick ; and it seems to have been at Arles that he was raised to the priesthood, if not to the deaconship, which he may have received at Lérins. It appears to me that Probus had this in his mind, or some confused tradition of it, when he wrote of St. Patrick's ordination to the priesthood at the hands of a certain Bishop "Senior," who lived in a "seven-walled city" on the southern sea. "Senior" was a monastic term, meaning "Superior," and the "seven walls" of his city, though not perhaps an exact description of Arles might be reminiscent of its imperial defences—and the imperial air left it by Constantine when, before he accorded the honour to Byzantium, he thought of making Arles his capital, and enriched it with a royal palace, and a theatre and an amphitheatre, whose ruins still attest its stately strength. It is to be remembered, that in the fifth century Arles, though now many miles inland, was close to the sea, and indeed a famous seaport, "where all the famous products of the rich

Orient, of perfumed Arabia, and of delicate Assyria, of fertile Africa, of fair Spain and of brave Gaul, abounded so profusely that one might have thought the various marvels of all the world were indigenous in its soil."<sup>5</sup>

So in "Roma Gallula," "the little Rome of Gaul," we may find traces of our Apostle's feet, and in that city, which was thus for a time a capital, he was in closest touch with events of far-reaching importance.

The year before the assassination of Bishop Patroculus, the Emperor Valentinian III, at the request of the Pope, had addressed to Amatius (or Armatius), the *Praefectus Praetorio*, a rescript calling on the Bishop to summon a Council at Arles to deal with some prelates accused of *Pelagianism*. The death of the Bishop had prevented the summoning of the Council; but soon after the consecration of Honoratus, and the restoration of peace, the matter was taken in hands again and a Council assembled which was to have far-reaching effects.

At the Council (which was probably held at Arles either in 427 or 428) there appeared, a Legate of Pope Celestine, a man whose name was to be associated in a remarkable way with that of St. Patrick. This man was Deacon Palladius. Who Palladius was we cannot exactly

<sup>5</sup> Bury: *Later Roman Empire I.*, p. 154. Sir Samuel Ferguson (pointing out that the *sigla* for six and seven were often confused) thinks that the "seven-walled city" may have been in reality the "six-walled city"; "Hexafrourai," of the Massilian Colonists—the modern "Six-fours" near Arles.

say, but there is good reason for accepting the conjecture of Father Shearman<sup>6</sup> and Cardinal Moran,<sup>7</sup> who see in him a son (born during his father's exile) of that Palladius, "Master of the Offices" in Byzantium who had been banished by Julian the Apostate to Britain, on an ill proved charge<sup>8</sup> of having prejudiced the Emperor Constantius against Julian's half-brother Gallus. If Deacon Palladius were this high official's son, and one of the "gens Palladia," many of whose members held high office in church and state both in the East and the West, and if he had been born in Britain, it is easy to understand how he came to play such an important rôle in the events we have now to chronicle.

The Council having been summoned to deal with Pelagianism, it is not surprising to find the papal representative, with his special interest in Britain, pressing for action against those who, in the native country of Pelagius, were spreading the poison of his doctrine. Signalled out by Prosper of Aquitaine as active in this matter we find the name of Agricola, son of Severianus, a "Pelagian Bishop," and it was determined to take active steps to combat the evil. Two of the most illustrious Bishops in Gaul were chosen by the Council to be sent to Britain : St. Lupus of Troyes (whom we have already met in Lérins), and at the express desire of Pope Celestine,

<sup>6</sup> *Loca Patriciana*, pp. 403, 463.

<sup>7</sup> *Essays*, p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> It seems this charge concealed the real grounds of offence to Julian the Apostate, the steadfast Christianity of the "Magister Officiorum."

stressed by his representative at the Council, Deacon Palladius, Saint Germanus of Auxerre.<sup>9</sup>

We can imagine with what intense interest our St. Patrick, then one of the priests of Honoratus's household, must have followed the discussions of the Council concerning his native island; and how his heart was stirred when he learned that he was to accompany on their epoch-making mission to Britain the two saints, Lupus (whom he already knew, having lived with him in Lérins) and Germanus, whose name was then in all men's mouths even as that of Martin of Tours had been in an earlier generation.

It is true that our only evidence for St. Patrick's participation in the mission is that of the scholiast on the *Hymn of Fiacc*; but it is hardly conceivable that our saint a native of Britain, with influential friends there, should have been passed over when SS. Germanus and Lupus must have needed urgently one whose knowledge of the language of the country and of local conditions would make his co-operation invaluable.

The story of that mission has been told at some length by Constantius, the priest of Lyons, who wrote the *Life* of Saint Germanus, which is almost as celebrated and as delightful as the immortal work of Sulpicius Severus on St. Martin. It lasted more than a year, and was completely successful. Constantius describes the missionaries as preaching not only in the churches, but at the cross-roads, and even in remote

<sup>9</sup> Prosper *Chron.*, A.D. 429.

country districts ; and here, except the country people spoke Latin generally (which is hard to assume) Patrick's knowledge of the British tongue must have made him invaluable to his chiefs. They had a formal public disputation with the protagonists of Pelagianism, and vanquished them not only by force of doctrine, but by miracles. Other memorable events of the mission were a pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Alban, the proto-martyr of Britain (which thus gave high sanction to the native cult of that valiant soldier of Christ), and a victory called the " Alleluia " victory which the strategy of Saint Germanus (both martial and mystic) helped the Britons to win over an invading force of Saxons and Picts.

For St. Germanus had been a soldier and a mighty hunter, as well as a statesman, in his youth, and had not forgotten the arts of war when Bishop Amator of Auxerre had caused him to be " tonsured," and forced him, even against his will, to make ready to succeed that holy old Bishop himself, in the episcopal see of his native city—and there was good strategy as well as strong faith, in the battle plan he devised for his neophytes. The story is told by Bede<sup>10</sup> (who follows closely Constantius), and as our Apostle was probably a participant in the notable event, we must stop to chronicle it.

" The Saxons and Picts made war upon the Britons . . . who implored the assistance of the holy bishops ; who hastening to them

<sup>10</sup> *Ecclesiastical History I., 20.*

inspired them with so much courage that one would have thought they had been joined by a mighty army. Thus, by these apostolic men, Christ Himself commanded in their camp. It was Lent, and the people resorted in great numbers to hear the priests, and be prepared for baptism. Most of the army, desiring to be cleansed in the saving waters at the approach of Easter, an oratory was constructed of leafy boughs and as beautifully adorned in that martial camp, as if it were a city church. The army marched out still wet with the baptismal water. The enemy hastened forward, but scouts had made known their advance to the Britons, of whom Germanus declared himself ready to be the leader. He picked out the most active, viewed the country round about, and observed in the way by which the enemy was expected, a valley encompassed with hills. In that place he drew up his troops. A multitude of fierce enemies appeared. As soon as he saw them Germanus, bearing in his hands the standard, instructed his men all in a loud voice to repeat his words. The enemy advanced securely, thinking to take the Britons by surprise. Three times the priests cried 'Alleluia!' A universal shout of the same word followed, with which the hills reverberated—and the enemy struck with terror, as if the rocks, nay the very sky were falling on them, broke and fled."

Shortly after this famous victory SS. Germanus and Lupus and their companions returned to Gaul. St. Honoratus of Arles had died in

the meantime (A.D. 429) and had been succeeded by his disciple, and kinsman Hilary (brother-in-law of St. Lupus). One gets the impression from various circumstances that Hilary was not so friendly to St. Patrick as Honoratus had been. At all events, instead of returning to Arles, we find our saint attaching himself to Germanus, and for the next two years or so, we must seek him in Auxerre.

It is a very curious fact that of all the teachers of St. Patrick the one who has made the most impression on his biographers has been St. Germanus of Auxerre. Thus he is the only one mentioned by Muirchu,<sup>11</sup> and in the *Hymn of Fiacc*; he is placed after St. Martin in the *Tripartite*, etc.; and most of them ascribe a length of sojourn of our saint with the great Bishop of Auxerre, which the dates of the latter's episcopacy, apart from anything else, emphatically contradict. "A long time which some reckon as forty years, some as thirty" is the expression of Muirchu; but as Germanus was only ordained Bishop in 418, and had been a military commander before this, even if St. Patrick had served all his "apprenticeship" with him there would be only room at most for fourteen years—viz., those between 418 and 432.

The *Vita Tertia* (cap. 21, 22) seems to be in the right when it speaks of our saint's association with St. Germanus as lasting for "four years." These would be the years between 428 and 432—from the beginning of the mission to Britain (or

<sup>11</sup> Muirchu I., 6.

at least from the date of the Council which arranged for that mission) to the date of St. Patrick's departure for Ireland.

During the mission to Britain, the condition of Ireland came before the visiting bishops, and perhaps messengers even presented themselves from the Christians in Ireland asking them to convey to the Pope the request to have a bishop sent to the sister island, and the Irish Church formally organized. We can imagine the eager part St. Patrick took in the discussion of this question, so dear to his heart ; and how ardently one part of him hoped (when the Irish mission was at length determined on, and the Pope had not only given his sanction for it, but to show his special interest in Ireland had appointed his own right-hand man, Palladius, to lead it) to have a share in it. It would appear, from an expression in the *Confession*,<sup>12</sup> that his own name had been put forward for the post of honour assigned to Palladius ; but for reasons which he himself fully appreciated (his want of learning<sup>13</sup> being the principal) he was not selected—nor, as far as we can judge from the *Confession*, did he even venture to offer himself as a coadjutor to Palladius, even though the monitor within his soul was urging him to do so. “ I did not proceed to Ireland of my own accord until I was nearly worn out,” he says in one passage of the *Confession* ; and again, alluding to the struggle within him, whether he should yield to the interior

<sup>12</sup> *Conf.*, 32.

<sup>13</sup> *Ib.* 46.

promptings (which only later he recognised as those of the Spirit), or the "prudent" advice of his seniors, who held him unfit for the mission, he writes : " I did not quickly yield in accordance with what had been shown to me (i.e., by divine inspiration) and as *the Spirit brought to my remembrance*. And the Lord showered mercy upon me thousands of times, because He saw that I was ready, but that I did not know through these [revelations] what I should do about my position, because many were forbidding this embassy. Moreover, they used to talk amongst themselves behind my back and say : ' Why does the fellow thrust himself into danger amongst hostile people *who know not God*. They did not say this out of malice ; but it did not seem meet in their eyes, on account of my illiteracy, as I myself witness that I have understood. And I did not quickly recognise the grace that was in me then. Now that seems meet in my eyes which I ought to have done before.' "

So, in the words of Prosper's *Chronicle* (which so fittingly forms the first entry under date A.D. 431 in the *Annals of Ulster*) " to the Irish believing in Christ Palladius ordained by Pope Celestine, was sent as their first bishop." And Patrick, his heart torn by conflicting emotions, was left behind in Auxerre.

But Christ himself had chosen the man of true and simple heart to be " His epistle for salvation unto the ends of the earth " ; and on the parchment of Patrick's soul, rubbed smooth by

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affliction, and made white and fair through prayer and penance, His message to the Irish people written "not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God," was to blaze forth in letters of gold.

## *Chapter VII.—The Mission to Ireland.*

“  OT to Palladius but to Patrick did God grant the conversion of Ireland.” Thus in a saying that has become proverbial did our Irish ancestors emphasize the providential aspect of the mission of St. Patrick, the assertion of which runs through his own *Confession* as its ever-recurring *leitmotif*.

It is easy, from a human point of view, to understand why, when a bishop was to be consecrated for the Irish Christians, who apparently, had asked for the favour,<sup>1</sup> the choice of Pope Celestine should fall on Palladius.

In the first place he knew him intimately, as Palladius was one of the seven Deacons of Rome, very important personages at that period, to judge from the business the Pope entrusted to them, and from whose “ college ” the sovereign pontiff himself was often selected.<sup>2</sup> Thus Palladius had proved his worth in at least one important embassy—*viz.*, at the Council where the mission of SS. Germanus and Lupus had been arranged, to combat Pelgianism in the

<sup>1</sup> Bury quotes St. Celestine himself as writing : “ Nullus invitis detur episcopus.”

<sup>2</sup> Thus Leo the Great, who was a colleague of Palladius as Deacon of Rome. They were to use the modern phrase “ papabili.”

British Church. If Palladius was, as seems likely, the British-born son of the great Byzantine official, Palladius "Magister Officiorum" he belonged to an aristocratic and influential family, which would add to his *prestige*; and his knowledge of affairs in Britain would be assumed to fit him in a special way for dealing with the Christians in Ireland, many of whom were of British origin.

Of the history of his mission to Ireland only fragmentary details have survived. We know the names of at least four of the men who accompanied him: Augustus, Benedict, Sylvester and Solinus. He is said to have landed at Inbher Dé (now Wicklow Harbour); and although traditions of the hostility of the local ruler, Nathi of the Uí Garrchu have come down to us they would appear to be unfounded. One good proof of this is that he and his companions were able to found three churches (which presupposes the establishment of three "christianities" (to use the technical term for little Christian settlements in a pagan land). Tech na Roman (now Tigroney) seems to have been their headquarters, having kept the designation "house of the Romans." At Domnach Aire ("Donard") they built a "Dominicum," or "Lord's house" on "a high field"; and their third house was at Cell Fine (the Church of the Septs) which Father Shearman has identified with Cilleen Cormac, an old churchyard "three miles north-east of Dunlavin." If Palladius, himself, founded all these churches in the short time of

his stay in Ireland he must have had the active help and patronage of the "powers that were" in the neighbourhood. Nathi was married to a daughter of the High King Laoghaire, and if her mother was the British Princess who, we know, was one of Laoghaire's Queens,<sup>3</sup> she may have been a Christian, and directly responsible for Palladius's opening his mission in that district. We must remember that he had been sent "to the Irish believing in Christ," and the history of his mission, however fragmentary, must be read in the light of that fact.

After a short stay in Irish territory, Palladius, we are told, proceeded to the land of the Picts. The suggestion forces itself on us that he may have undertaken this journey in order to visit St. Ninnian, the Apostle of the Picts, whom he could have known perhaps in his boyhood in Britain, and, more likely still, in Rome. For Bede tells us of Ninnian (the founder of Candida Casa, or Whitehern), "a most revered bishop and holy man of the British nation," that he "had been regularly instructed at Rome in the faith and mysteries of the truth." He would also appear to have been a disciple of St. Martin at the *Magnum Monasterium* in Tours, and to have been the first to introduce monasticism into the British Isles. His white stone church, the wonder of his British contemporaries, was dedicated to St. Martin.

<sup>3</sup> *Book of Armagh*, 31. In the story of the foundation of Trim we learn that Feidhlim son of Laoghaire had for his mother a British Princess, called Scothnoe. He was himself married to another British Princess.

It is a striking circumstance that the death of St. Ninnian is assigned to 431, the very year of the death of Palladius. It occurs to us, therefore, that these two dates, falling so near each other, and perhaps when Palladius was on a visit to Ninnian, may have been the result of some pestilential epidemic. Though a darker tragedy is hinted at in the falling off of the Southern Picts (Ninnian's neophytes) from Christianity, to which St. Patrick himself refers in his *Epistle against Coroticus*, when he speaks of the "apostate Picts." A tradition that Palladius was martyred in Pictland is recorded in the *Vita Secunda*. The event is said to have occurred "on the plain of Girgin, in a place which is called Fordun." And there, in a church dedicated to him, his relics were venerated until the falling away of Scotland from the Faith in the sixteenth century, and as "St. Pledi," he was lovingly remembered and invoked.

The news of the death of Palladius was speedily brought to the Continent by two of his fellow missionaries, Augustus and Benedict. They would seem to have come in the first place to Auxerre, whence Germanus exercised, on behalf of the Pope, a sort of supervision over the Irish mission, and had established what we might call a missionary base, for the supply of the mission's need, and the recruitment and replacement of its *personnel*. Indeed, a second relay of missionaries headed by St. Patrick and a priest called Segetius, was actually on its way to Ireland to reinforce the staff of Palladius, when they were

met by Augustus and Benedict with the news of their chief's death. This meeting took place at a town called by Muirchu " Ebmoria "<sup>4</sup>—a place name which has puzzled all Patrician commentators, but which Rev. Sylvester Malone has identified satisfactorily as " Eburo-briga " (the modern " St. Florentin ") about 20 miles N.N.E. from Auxerre. Having heard their tidings, St. Patrick and his companions turned back to take counsel with Germanus. The latter, exercising the delegated authority he had from the Pope as regards the Irish mission, appointed St. Patrick as the successor of Palladius. And he consecrated him bishop—" apud Sanctum Amatorem "—at the basilica of St. Amator, outside the city of Auxerre, where his own holy predecessor in the See of Auxerre awaits the Resurrection. On the same day two others, who were afterwards to be bishops in Ireland, Auxilius and Isserninus, received, according to Muirchu, " lower degrees of the ministry."<sup>5</sup>

Without further delay, then, St. Patrick took leave of his friends in Auxerre, and set out once more for the country whence he had some twenty years earlier fled as an escaped slave.

Instead of sailing directly from the Gallic port our Apostle appears to have first gone to Britain, to visit his relatives there, and to collect the recruits for the Irish mission, which the British Church was to furnish. For the conquest of

<sup>4</sup> Muirchu I., 8, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Thus Zimmer (*Nennius Vindicatus*, p. 122) satisfactorily explains a passage of Muirchu (I. 9) which has puzzled all previous commentators.

Ireland for Christ was a big undertaking ; and those who were directing it—Pope Celestine himself, who had not only sanctioned it but had given his Deacon Palladius to lead it ; Saint Germanus of Auxerre, who seems to have exercised a delegated power in the supervision of it, and its other responsible “managers,” recognised that the full weight of the Churches both in Gaul and Britain must be behind it—and they were.

When St. Patrick arrived among his own people he found them very much opposed to his taking up the post of honour—and danger—in the Mission, and prepared to offer him every inducement to settle down quietly in Britain. It is to this he refers in his *Confession* (Chap. 36, 37) :

“ Whence . . . came to me that gift so great, so salutary, the knowledge and love of God, but only that I might part with fatherland and kindred. . . And many gifts were proffered me with weeping and tears. And I displeased them, and also against my wish, not a few of my superiors ; but God being my guide, in no way did I consent or yield to them. It was not any grace in me but God Who overcometh in me ; and He withstood them all, so that I came to the heathen Irish to preach the Gospel, and to endure insults from unbelievers, so as to *hear the reproach of my going abroad*, and [endure] many persecutions *even unto bonds*, and that I should give up the privilege of my birth for the profit of others. And if I should be worthy, I am ready [to give] even my life for *His name's sake*,

unhesitatingly and very gladly ; and there I desire to spend it even unto death, if the Lord would grant it to me."

Having overcome this last trial of his constancy our saint resumed his journey, and sailing from some British harbour landed at Inbher Dé, as Palladius had done. His objective there, we may be sure, was to visit those missionaries whom Palladius had left in that region, when he himself sailed on that journey to Pictland, which brought about his early death. Having spent some time with Sylvester and Solinus, our saint took ship again, and sailed for the northern parts of Ireland.

Some of St. Patrick's modern biographers have treated as a wild, though picturesque legend the journey to the dún of Miliucc, or at least its motive. But in this they seem to be mistaken. Patrick had left Ireland as a " run-away " slave. It was of the utmost importance for the success of his mission that he should put himself right with the Irish law, and accordingly it was but the rudiments of common sense that he should visit Miliucc and avert the danger to the mission of having its leader arrested as a fugitive bondsman. Moreover, Miliucc's children were his dear friends, and among others of the *Dál Buain*, there were doubtless many whom his boyish example had won for Christ. I suggest, therefore, as satisfying all the *criteria* of the situation, that his first intention was to begin work in the regions he knew best. And he seems to have landed at Inver Slaney in Strangford Lough,

with the prospect of getting in touch with the daughter of Miliucc, Bronach, whose son, as we have already learned was to be the great Saint Mochaoi of Nendrum, the first of our Irish boys to be recruited by St. Patrick for that native priesthood, on which he relied so much for the success of his mission.

One question that suggests itself at this point is, who were St. Patrick's companions when he landed in Ireland? It is difficult to get a definite answer to that question. Tirechán (who describes the first movements of our saint in Ireland in a different order from that followed by Muirchu) speaks of him as arriving at the "Island of Maccu Chor" with "Gaulish companions; and with him a multitude of holy bishops, and priests, and deacons, and exorcists, and ostiarii, and lectors, as well as boys whom he ordained." But this is evidently an anticipation of later days when the Irish Church was fully organized. There seem to have been both Gauls and Britons among the clergy who formed the first relay of the Patrician missionary army; but the only name that emerges from the narrative, at this point, is that of the British priest, Lomman, who was to found a "christianity" at Trim in interesting circumstances to be afterwards noted. Other British names in Tirechán's list, in addition to Lomman's brothers,<sup>6</sup> were those of Catideus, Catus (Cadoc?), and Mochta. Among Gaulish names we have those of Bernicius and Ernicius. But we cannot say,

<sup>6</sup> Munis, Broccaid, Broccan, Mugenoc are mentioned in the Add. Notes to Tirechán in the *Book of Armagh*.

of any of the names tabulated by Tirechán, who were those who formed with Patrick the advance party. Probably it was not very numerous. The story of the Tara episode, which we shall presently narrate, tells of his coming to Tara with "eight men and a lad" (Benignus). Probably allowing for one or two, whom he left behind him in Mag-Inis, and those he detached to help Lomman with the foundation at Trim, there would not be much more than a dozen in St. Patrick's company when he first came to Ireland.<sup>7</sup> But it must be remembered that the Mission was being constantly recruited, both in Britain and in Gaul, while its material wants were supplied from Church funds in those countries. In fact at Auxerre, and probably at Arles and Lérins there were—what we might call missionary "bases" which looked after the *personnel* of the Mission, and its requirements; and, as we shall see, called St. Patrick himself to account when complaints of him, or his methods, reached the supervising authorities. Of this we shall find abundant proof in the *Confession*.

One very remarkable feature of the Patrician Mission to Ireland was the part played in it by women. Many of the missionaries had their mothers and sisters and other feminine relatives follow them from Gaul and Britain to do missionary work among Irish women; and the names of the numerous "sisters" with whom St. Patrick has been endowed by many of his

<sup>7</sup> The *Vita Tertia* tells us that they numbered twenty-four. *Trias Thau.*, p. 23.

mediaeval biographers are probably those of some of the holy women, to whom we owe so much. But the work of these devoted ladies will best be treated in a separate chapter, when we are discussing St. Patrick's missionary methods.

We have seen that since the Roman Empire became Christian, in name at least, the administrative divisions in the political order determined, to a large extent, the religious. This conception of affairs must have been almost instinctive with St. Patrick, and accordingly, he would aim, in his missionary plans, at founding as near as possible to the political capital of Ireland, his own principal church.

Now, Tara, the royal seat of the High Kings of the race of Con of the Hundred Battles, was at that time the "imperial city," the centre of government and power for the greater part of Ireland. The overseas expedition of Niall and Dathí had brought riches and luxuries to its "halls," and while Laoghaire, the son of Niall, feasted in the *Tech Miodhchuarta*, there sat at board with him the sons of the kings of the other "Fifths" who had taken stipends from him, or there came from the "mount of the hostages," the sighs of the fettered sons of the kings who had opposed him. To the Féis of Tara came the men of Eire in convention "to complete the laws and customs of the country,"<sup>8</sup> and to the tribunal at Tara of the High King assisted by his Brehons they brought their differ-

<sup>8</sup> Keating : *Foras Feasa* (Ed. by Father Dinneen) III.  
37.

ences to be adjusted, their grievances to obtain satisfaction. The brothers and sons, and kinsmen of the High King ruled over the kingdoms of Connacht, Airgheálla, Aileach, as well as in the districts around Tara itself.

It was natural that as soon as feasible after his arrival in Ireland (having had the winter to discuss and prepare his plans with the assistance of Díchu), St. Patrick should have been anxious, when the weather conditions should make travelling possible, to visit the High King at Tara.<sup>9</sup> If he did not succeed in obtaining the monarch's permission to establish a Christian settlement near the royal *dún*, it would be important for him not to make the High King his active opponent by neglecting to pay him the courtesy of a visit, and it would be distinctly necessary to secure, if not his patronage and co-operation, at least his toleration.

So, when "o'er the dusky forest roof" that the west wind set stirring around Loch Cuan "the glad spring ran leaving a track sea green," and the scent of the rising sap charged the breezes with heartening messages of hope, and calls to fruitful activity, St. Patrick had his boat taken from the sheds where it had wintered, and made ready for the sea once more. Then, bidding good-bye for a time to Díchu, the Apostle set his face southwards, towards Tara. "So they carried their boat down to the sea,"

<sup>9</sup> For the position of the High Kings at this period see Mrs. Green's *Irish State to 1014*, which embodies the results of Dr. Eoin MacNeill's researches.

says Muirchu<sup>10</sup> " and left the good man, Dichu, in full faith and peace . . . and were borne well and prosperously to the harbour of the Mouth of the Colpdi. . . . " in other words to the estuary of the Boyne.

Leaving the boat for the use of Lomman (who, as we shall presently see had important business to take him up the Boyne to Trim) St. Patrick made his way towards Slane by road.

He probably had arranged to meet some Christians in the district, for at this point we find in his company a young cleric, Kannanus or Cianán, of Duleek, whom our Apostle was to ordain to the priesthood at Slane on that memorable Holy Saturday when the unextinguishable "Easter Fire" was to be first lighted in our land. Whether St. Kieran had been with St. Patrick in Mag Inis, or whether he had made his studies in Britain or Gaul, and was waiting to join him until our Apostle reached "the Cianachta of Meath," and belonged to one of the pre-Patrician Irish Christian families there, does not appear. Tirechán tells us that it was Cianán who carried the blessed fire and the wax lights<sup>11</sup> from the very hands of Patrick to kindle them "in the nostrils of King Laoghaire," so that he played a bold part in the drama of Patrick's first Easter in Ireland. The home of his family seems to have been at the mouth of the Boyne, for another story in the *Tripartite*<sup>12</sup> recalls an earlier Cianán, living at that spot, who is represented as playing a very ignoble rôle on the occasion of

<sup>10</sup> I., 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Book of Armagh.* 10.

<sup>12</sup> I., 22.

St. Patrick's escape from Miliucc. He is charged indeed with selling the poor fugitive who was lodging with him to the Gallic sailors for a brazen cauldron ; but the cauldron proving a very inconvenient article of furniture (every hand that came in contact with it remained firmly fastened to it !) he was glad to rescind the transaction ; and having repented of his transgression, he subsequently became a Christian. Of this fantastic story we may retain, perhaps, as basic facts the location of the family to which St. Cianán belonged near the mouth of the Boyne and their pre-Patrician Christianity.

Another of the "Cianachta" who welcomed St. Patrick to his home on this journey is Seschen, the father of St. Benen or Benignus. The confusion in Tirechán's<sup>15</sup> narrative at this point makes it difficult to locate Seschen's *dún*, but Archbishop Healy places it in the "valley of the Boyne". Perhaps Seschen's small son, Benen, was in fosterage at that time at Inbher Ailbne (Gormanstown) where St. Patrick was presently to find him. Tirechán tells us that Patrick built a church in Seschen's Valley, and left there two "foreign youths," and brought away with him the chieftain's son, another Seschen—after that he came "at eventide" to Inver Ailbne, and there, too, he was hospitably received. But the attraction his personality had on young Benen was quite extraordinary. All day long the boy followed him around, and as the lovely story has it, when he found the saint

sleeping after the weariness of his journey, he gathered an armful of fragrant flowers to scatter over his couch. That night he insisted on sleeping at the saint's feet, and when morning came, and the Apostle was about to depart young Benen refused to be separated from him. The saint, according to the quaint story in *Tirechán*, had one foot in his chariot and the other on the ground, when the little boy rushed forward, and grasping the foot that was on the ground, seized it firmly, and would not let it go, until he had obtained from the saint himself and his own foster parents, leave to accompany the missionaries to Tara.

In the meantime St. Lomman was winning for the Mission another little boy recruit who was no other than a grandson of the High King Laoghaire himself. The story is told in the "Additions to *Tirechán*" in the *Book of Armagh*.<sup>14</sup>

Having parted with St. Patrick, Lomman and his companions rowed up the Boyne towards the Ford of the Alders (Trim). They reached it just as day was breaking, and in its first rays there issued from the *dún* of Prince Feidhlimidh, for their morning swim in the royal stream, a band of youths, headed by the Prince's son, young Fortchern. The boy saw the stranger monk reading the Gospel, and wondering at the sight, fell into talk with him. Fortchern remained so long that his mother, alarmed at his long absence, came out to look for him, and there to her great

<sup>14</sup> *B. of A.*, p. 31.

joy, she found her little son conversing with a man of her own race, for she too was of British birth, like Lomman. Presently they were joined by her husband, Prince Feidhlimidh, and as his mother had also been a British Princess (rejoicing in the charming name Scothnoe, "fresh blossom") he, too, was fluent in the British tongue, and was glad to speak it with Lomman. The sequel to the story was that Prince Feidhlimidh gave his *dún* to Lomman (on behalf of St. Patrick), for a Christian settlement, and entrusted to him for education in the Faith, his son Fortchern, who grew up to be a Bishop, and Co-arb of Lomman in the Abbacy of Trim.

It seems very probable, as Bury suggests, that Lomman's visit to Trim had been arranged beforehand, and that Prince Feidhlimidh, son of a British mother, and wedded to a British Princess, was already a Christian in heart—and only awaited the coming of the missionaries to be received into the Church. Thus in the royal family itself the Mission had powerful friends.

## *Chapter VIII.—Slane and Tara.*



HE arrival of St. Patrick and his missionaries in Ireland had not, we may be sure, been kept secret from the High King. Long before their coming, indeed, so the old books relate, his Druids who, "through their heathenish and idolatrous religion had skill to know and foresee all things before they came to pass," had prophesied concerning them. Fittingly enough it was as a vested priest at the Mass altar that the figure of St. Patrick had been foreshadowed to them, and the ancient Irish verses in which they prophesied of him are still extant :<sup>1</sup>

Shaven head will come over the rough sea,  
His chasuble head-holed, his staff crook-headed,  
His table at the east end of the house  
All his people shall answer

Amen, Amen.

And knowing that he should destroy the "idols and impure things" they worshipped, and do away with the false religion of which they were the exponents, they tried to prejudice the High King against Christianity, describing it as "a foreign religion, in the manner of a kingdom, with

<sup>1</sup> *Muirchu I*, 10.

strange doctrines, brought from a long distance across the sea, proclaimed by a few, accepted by the many, and honoured by all ; one that would overturn kingdoms, slay kings that resist it, lead away multitudes, destroy all their gods, and having cast down all the resources of their art, reign for ever and ever."

Now, on the 25th of March each year there was held at Tara a great assembly to mark the "birthday of the year," the re-birth of vegetation. This was a druid festival celebrated with "many incantations and magical devices," and it gathered on the royal hill not only the chief ministers of Druidism, but the "kings, satraps, leaders, princes, and chief men of the people." One of the ceremonies was the striking forth of "new fire"; and there was an ordinance (reinforced by the death penalty) that until the druid spark should be drawn by friction from the sacred wood on the royal heights of Tara, no fire must be kindled on any hearth in Eire. It is to be observed that this Pagan custom of the "Easter Fire" lit on the top of mountains (the "Easter mountain") was general all over Europe, as a ceremonial of the religion of nature worship, and signified the victory of spring over winter. It lasted on as a heathen survival in many places until as late as the eighth century, and many severe edicts were issued by Church councils against these sacrilegious "Easter fires," A more effective step was taken against them when the Church adopted the ceremony into her own Paschal ritual, cleansing the procedure of

its Pagan concept, and giving it a Christian significance, by referring it "to the fiery column in the desert, and to the Resurrection of Christ." The "new fire" of the Christians on Holy Saturday is drawn from flint, signifying the Resurrection of the Light of the World from the tomb closed by a stone.<sup>2</sup>

It happened in the year 433 that Easter fell on the 26th March, and for the celebration of it St. Patrick chose the Hill of Slane, which from the northern bank of the Boyne faces Tara lying southward ten miles away. Our saint had probably some special reason for his selection of Slane, though what it was does not transpire. That hill which dominates the lovely plain of Bregia, and commands one of the fairest and most extensive prospects in our land had doubtless some historic connection, which made it venerable to the Bregians; for Muirchu, who describes it by its old name, "the graves of the men of Fiacc" (*Ferta Fer Féic*) speaks of an old story concerning the digging of these "graves" by the "men (i.e., slaves) of Feccol Ferchertni, who was one of the nine great prophets of Breg." On that historic hill, then, Patrick and his companions pitched their tent, and prepared to "pay to the most high God the due votive offerings of the Paschal feast and the sacrifice of praise with all devotion."

That Easter, the first to be celebrated in Ireland by our Apostle was to be made memorable

<sup>2</sup> Art. by Frederick Holweck in *Cath. Encyclopedia* (Easter).

for the Christians of Meath by a very moving spectacle, the ordination of the first priest of their race—St. Cianán of Duleek. Many catechumens, too, would there be gathered to receive in the Boyne, the Sacrament of Baptism. For in the Easter celebrations the administration of the solemn rite of Baptism to the catechumens who had passed their “scrutinies” formed an integral and very important part.<sup>3</sup>

The ceremonies began by the striking forth from tinder of the “new fire” and the blessing of the Paschal Candle; then, it would appear that a huge pyre, set ready for the purpose on the top of Slane was lighted from the blessed flame by Cianán—who, thereby “kindled a fire which in Eire shall not be extinguished for ever.”

Across the darkness of the March night that Easter flame on Slane threw its challenge to Tara which, still wrapped in Pagan shadows, waited for the druid spark to be struck from the stubborn wood. The whole sky above Bregia brightened with a illumination fairer than that of day; the Boyne rolled waves of gleaming light; the “Light of the World” had, indeed, come forth from the Stone Sepulchre, and His rays fell lovely and sweet and pure on “virgin Eire,” to illumine her until the end of time!

But when that light flamed through the darkness there was wrath and fierce indignation in the breast of the High King, and in the hearts of his Druids; and the gathered nobles listened in

<sup>3</sup> Duchesne : *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, pp. 250, 298 et seq.

dismay to the monarch's angry words : " Who is it that has dared to do this impiety in my kingdom ? Let him die the death." And all the nobles and elders made answer : " We know not who has done this thing." Then the Druids answered and said : " O King live for ever. As for this fire which we behold, and which has been lighted up this night before one was lighted in thy house, that is in the palace of Tara, unless it be put out on this night on which it has been lighted up, it will not be put out for ever. Moreover it will overcome all the fires of our religion. And he who kindled it, and the kingdom that will follow, from which it is kindled this night, will overcome both all of us, and thee, too, and it will draw away all the men of thy kingdom, and all kingdoms will yield to it, and he will fill all things and will reign for ever."

When Laoghaire, the High King, heard these things, Muirchu tells us, " he was like Herod of old, sore troubled, and all the city of Tara with him. And he answered and said : ' It shall not be so, but now we will go that we may see the issue of the matter ; and we shall take and slay those who do such an impiety against our kingdom.'

" And so, having yoked nine chariots, in accordance with the tradition of the gods, and taking with him for the conflict those two druids who excelled all others, that is to say, Lucetmael and Lochru, Laoghaire proceeded at the close of that night from Tara to the Graves of the Men of Fiacc (*i.e.*, Slane) turning the faces of

the men and horses lefthandwise, as they thought fitting.”<sup>4</sup>

And thus with druid ritual, with prancing horses and carved and painted chariots, and glittering harness, and the splendour of royalty and the pride of arms, the forces of druidism went forth that Easter vigil to answer the challenge of the Light of the World.

“ And as they went on their way, the druids said to the king : ‘ O King thou must not go into the place where the fire is, lest perhaps thou do homage to him who kindled it ; but thou must be outside it, near at hand, and let him be summoned to thee, that he may do homage and pledge his fealty to thee. And we and he shall parley with one another in thy presence, O King, and in this way thou shalt test us.’

“ And the High King answered and said : ‘ Good is your counsel ; I will do as ye have said.’ And when they arrived at the appointed place, they alighted from their chariots and horses ; and they entered not into the enclosure of the place where the fire had been kindled ; but took their seats close by.”

The *Tripartite*<sup>5</sup> which, in the main, follows Muirchu in the account of the incidents at Slane, has some picturesque details, which seem to have come down from an eye witness. It tells how when Patrick, summoned to the king’s presence outside the enclosure of the *Ferta*, went forth chanting the verse : “ Some put their trust in

<sup>4</sup> Muirchu I, 14, 15, 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Tript.* I, 41 et seq.

chariots and some in horses ; but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God," he found the warriors seated on the ground with the rims of their shields against their chins. For the druids had forbidden any of the king's party to pay the saint the courtesy of rising to their feet when he appeared. Only one among the nobles dared to break the druidical injunction. This was Erc mac Dega. And he had his reward exceeding great ; for Patrick's blessing, there and then bestowed on him, brought him the gift of faith. He joined the missionaries, and as he was a trained Ollamh in Laws was of great service to the mission in interpreting its relations with the Irish legal system, and eventually in adjusting the latter to the requirements of Christianity. He became, in after years, Bishop of Slane—and on that holy spot where he first did reverence to Patrick, he himself awaits the Resurrection.

When they had Patrick in the midst of their hostile company, the two druids made no long delay before entering on a disputation with him. The druid, second in importance, Lochru, began in a blustering and studiously offensive way : "then," says the *Tripartite*, "did he go astray into blaspheming the Trinity and the Catholic Faith. Patrick, thereupon looked wrathfully upon him, and cried out unto God with a loud voice, saying : 'Lord, Who canst do all things, and on Whose power dependeth all that exists, and Who hast sent us hither to preach Thy name to the heathen, let this ungodly man, who blasphemeth Thy name, be lifted up and let him

forthwith die.' Hardly had he said these words, when the druid was caught up into the air, and forthwith again cast down, and his skull striking against a rock, his brains were scattered on the stone and he was killed before their very eyes, and the heathen folk at the sight were a-dread."

But in the heart of the High King dread added to the anger already flaming there, and he would have his bodyguard slay the Apostle where he stood. But, Patrick cried out in a voice of clearness and power : " Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered ; let them that hate Him fly from before His face. Like as the smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish, like as wax melteth at the fire, so let the ungodly perish at the presence of God." At that strong prayer the very earth shook and trembled ; and to the terrified onlookers the sky seemed to fall and the maddened horses broke away, and the wind whirled the chariots through the fields, and there was a headlong flight over the great plain of Bregia, so that none remained in the presence of Patrick but only the High King and his Queen, Angas, daughter of Tassach, daughter of Liathain, and two of their household.

Then the Queen, as a loving and faithful wife, approached the saint on bended knee, that the anger of heaven might be averted from her lord, and this was her prayer : " O just and mighty man, do not destroy the King, and the King shall come, and kneel and worship thy Lord." Under the impulse of fear, the King knelt down in Patrick's presence, and re-iterated the promise

of accepting Christianity the Queen had made for him. But he had no intention of keeping his promise, we are told, once the danger was past.

On the contrary he meditated a despicable act of treachery. He invited Patrick and his companions to follow him to Tara—promising to receive the Faith “in the presence of the men of Eire” there assembled. But “he set an ambush on every path between Ferta Fer Féic to Tara,” so that the saint and his company might perish on the way thither on the morrow.

But God was watching over His own. The *Tripartite* tells us how “Patrick went with eight young clerics and Benen as a gillie with them, and Patrick gave them his blessing before they set out. A cloak of darkness went over them, so that not a man of them appeared. Howbeit, the enemies who were waiting to ambush them, saw eight deer going past them, and behind them a fawn with a bundle on its back. That was Patrick with his eight, and Benen behind them with his tablets on his back.”

It was, while he went unscathed through the hidden dangers that lurked for him at the hostile king’s command between Slane and Tara, that Patrick composed his famous *Hymn of Invocation*, that Gaelic hymn called by some from the circumstances of its composition *Fáed Fiada* (“*the Deer’s Cry*”), and by others, from its miraculous power to shield those who invoked God’s aid by its verses, the *Lorica* or *Shield of St. Patrick*. It were well, if all of us who glory

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in being Patrick's children, knew the stirring words of that most mighty prayer :

I bind to myself to-day a strong virtue, an invocation of the Trinity ;  
I believe in a Threeness with confession of an Oneness in the Creator of the universe ;  
I bind to myself to-day the virtue of Christ's Birth with His Baptism ;  
the virtue of His Crucifixion with His Burial ;  
the virtue of His Resurrection with His Ascension ;  
the virtue of His coming to the Judgment of Doom ;  
the virtue of ranks of Cherubim ;  
obedience of Angels ;  
the service of Archangels ;  
hope of Resurrection.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The *Lorica* of St. Patrick is to be found with translation in Stokes's edition of the *Tripartite* (I., 48—53); in the Bernard and Atkinson edition of *Liber Hymnorum* I., 133 (English translation II., 49). Curiously enough it is not included in the Franciscan MS. of the *Liber Hymnorum*, though it is in that possessed by Trinity College. There is an English translation in Todd's *Life of St. Patrick* (pp. 426—429). Dr. Whitley Stokes and Todd translate the first word of the hymn "Atomriug," as "I bind to myself" (ad-dom-riug—i.e., ad-riug "ad jungo," with the infix'd pronoun *dom* to me). Drs. Bernard and Atkinson translate the word as "I arise."

## *Chapter IX.—At Tara.*

**O**N the following day, which was Easter Sunday, there was a great banquet in the *Tech Miodhchuarta* at Tara to round off the celebrations inaugurated the previous evening.

Muirchu tells us that “the kings and princes and druids of all Ireland” were feasted that day by the High King, for “it was the chiefest of their festivals.” While they drank the red wine of regal hospitality, “whose lavish pouring was as the beat of surf upon the shore,” they talked of the marvels of the day before, and wondered what might follow them. Suddenly they saw Patrick and five of his companions standing in their midst. That was the greatest marvel they had yet witnessed, for the ponderous doors of the banqueting hall were bolted, and at the outworks on the royal hill guards had been set to challenge his passage. Yet here he stood in the royal presence, unchallenged by the guards.

When our saint entered the *Tech Miodhchuarta* the High King’s guests, mindful of the druid’s proscription of the night before, refused him the courtesy of rising to greet his entrance. Only two people there did him that honour. “That was Dubhthach maccu Lugir, king poet

of the island of Eire, and of the king," says the *Tripartite*, " and a youthful poet of his household named Fiacc." We shall hear of Dubhthach again—and of Fiacc—and learn under what circumstances Fiacc (afterwards Bishop of Sletty) was " tonsured " by Patrick.

Dubhthach, we are told, both by Muirchu and the *Tripartite* was the first convert Patrick made on Tara that day, and " Patrick bestowed a blessing on him and on his offspring."

The High King, mindful of his promises on the Hill of Slane, received the saint with a certain show of courtesy. He invited him to his own couch, and having set him in the place of honour, ordered food and drink to be placed before him. Patrick received these civilities in a most gracious manner, though he knew perfectly well how little good will was behind them.

That was soon made evident, when, apparently with the High King's knowledge, the druid Lucetmael, wishing to avenge the death of his brother druid Lochru, at Slane the night before, tried to kill the saint, by putting a drop of powerful poison into his cup while he was not looking. But Patrick knew what had happened. He blessed the cup, and the liquid in it congealed ; then he turned the vessel upside down, and the drop the druid had put into it fell out, leaving only the original contents which, being blessed again by the saint, became fluid once more.

The druid, feeling that he had been worsted in this preliminary encounter, thereupon proposed a contest of " miracles " on the plain in sight

of the multitude. It was the challenge of the Powers of Darkness, with their limited and malicious control over the forces of nature, to the power of Almighty God, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. That day God made Patrick the gerent of His power—so that it might be made manifest to the men and women of Eire, gathered on Tara's royal heights—and both Muirchu and Tirechán, and the *Tripartite* have pictured the contest between the two religions struggling that Easter Sunday for the possession of Eire with a dramatic force which makes their readers feel as if we ourselves were among the awed thousands of eye-witnesses, the “hosts biding without Tara in the plain.”

“ After the trial of the cup the Druid said : ‘ Let us work miracles on this great plain.’ And Patrick answered and said ‘ What miracles ?’ The druid answered : ‘ Let us bring snow upon the earth.’ Then Patrick said : ‘ I do not wish to bring things that are contrary to the Will of God.’ And the druid said : ‘ I will bring it in the sight of all !’ Then he began his magical incantations, and brought down snow over the whole plain to the depths of a man’s waist ; and all saw it, and marvelled. And St. Patrick said : ‘ Lo, we see this thing, now take it away.’ But the other replied : ‘ I cannot take it away till this time to-morrow.’ Then the saint said : ‘ Able art thou to do evil, but not good. I am not of that sort.’ Thereupon he blessed the whole plain round about ; and the snow vanished quicker than a word could be uttered, without any

rain, or cloud or wind. And the multitude shouted aloud, and marvelled greatly.

" And a little after this, the magician invoked his demons, and brought upon the earth a very thick darkness as a miracle, and all murmured at it. The saint said : ' Drive away the darkness.' But he could not in this case either. St. Patrick, however, prayed and uttered a blessing, and suddenly the darkness was driven away, and the sun shone forth. And all shouted aloud, and gave thanks.

" Now when all these things had been done by the magician and Patrick in the sight of the king, the king said to them : ' Throw your books into water ; and we shall honour him whose books come out unharmed.' Patrick replied : ' I will do it ! ' But the druid protested : ' I do not wish to enter into a trial by water with this fellow ; for water is his God.' (He had evidently heard of baptism by water given by Patrick.) And the king answered and said : ' Throw them into fire ! ' And Patrick said : ' I am ready.' But the druid, being unwilling, said : ' This man worships as his God water and fire turn about every alternate year.' And the saint said, ' That is not so ; but thou thyself shalt go, and one of my lads shall go with thee, into a house separated and shut up ; and my garment shall be around thee, and thy garment around him, and fire shall be set to the house, and the judgment of the Most High invoked by this ordeal.' "

At this point the *Tripartite* which hitherto follows Muirchu with great exactness adds a

touching and very appealing detail—which brings on the stage set for these great happenings a group of dear Irish boys. These little princes, who were at the court of the High King as hostages for their fathers, had been, as we might expect, deeply interested spectators of the wonderful events of that memorable Easter Sunday. Now when the ordeal of fire had been proposed, they were doubly interested, inasmuch as young Benen, who was doubtless about their own age, had been selected as Patrick's representative in it. They, therefore, followed with a keen scrutiny the preparations made for the staging of the ordeal, and having discovered that an act of treachery was being planned, they came in tears to Patrick to tell him of it. "Then came to Patrick the three children who were biding in hostageship with Laoghaire. They weep to Patrick—'What is the matter?' asked the saint. 'A prince's troth,' they answered 'hath been broken in the chief city of the Gael: that is to say the house that is a-building for the druid and thy gillie, thus is it a-building, half of green wood, and half of dry, and it is in the half made of dry wood thy gillie is to be put.'"

So was it done: the druid with Patrick's chasuble around him was put into the green wood portion of the hut, and young Benen, vested in the druid's tunic, in the dry. The door was bolted from the outside, and fire was set to it. "And it came to pass in that hour, that as Patrick prayed the flame of the fire burnt up the druid with the half of the house that was made of

green wood. the cloak of Patrick alone remaining unscathed. Benen, on the other hand, in the dry half was neither touched by the fire, nor the least alarmed ; only the cloak of the druid, which was around him was, by the Will of God, burnt up.”

The effect of these stupendous miracles on the people was instantaneous ; but the reaction of the High King to them is less evident. Muirchu indeed says that, after a fierce outburst of anger against the saint, caused by the death of his druid, he took counsel with his “ elders and all his senate,” and arrived at the somewhat interested conclusion expressed in the formula : ‘ it is better for me to believe than to die.’ “ And after taking counsel,” says Muirchu, “ he believed on that day, by the advice of his friends, and turned to the everlasting Lord God of Israel ; and there many others believed as well.”

Tirechán, on the other hand, expressly states that the most Laoghaire did for Patrick was to give him a safe conduct through his kingdom, and allow him to propagate the Christian religion, unopposed. But for himself, old Pagan ideas of loyalty to ancestral beliefs, of unrelenting hostility towards ancestral foes, forbade him to accept the Christian teachings of charity and forgiveness. “ But he himself could not believe, saying : ‘ for Niall, my father, forbade me to believe, commanding me rather to be buried on the ramparts of Tara, as men stand up in battle’ ; for the gentiles are wont to be buried in their sepulchres fully armed, with weapons ready facing the foe,

until the day of *Erdathe* as the druids call it, that is, the Day of Judgment of the Lord. ' Thus must I, the son of Niall, be buried, even as the son of Dunlaing is buried at Maistin, because of the endurance of our enmity.' ''<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Armagh*, p. 19, 20.

## *Chapter X.—In Meath and Central Ireland.*



T his point, the modern historian of St. Patrick's missionary labours finds himself deprived of the guidance of Muirchu who, content to indicate in a general way the "Teaching and Baptism" of St. Patrick concentrates more on his "Miracles," for the remaining portion of his narrative.

Having described the events of Easter Saturday, 433, at Slane, and Easter Sunday at Tara, he writes : "Now St. Patrick, according to the command of the Lord Jesus, to 'go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,' set out from Tara and preached, the Lord working with him, and confirming the word with signs following."

To find out where Patrick preached after that never-to-be-forgotten Paschal festival we have to turn to Tirechán, and as his work besides being incomplete, has been composed with less regard to "form" than Muirchu's, and the events of several of St. Patrick's missionary campaigns have been thrown by him into one "circulus" (setting out from Tara, and returning to Meath) through Meath, Connacht and

Ulster, it is not quite easy to follow him with the same sense of knowing our way as we experienced when Muirchu was our guide.

Instead of endeavouring to reconstruct the itineraries of Patrick, with the help of Tirechán and the *Tripartite*, it seems to me that we shall get a clearer view of his mission if we study it chronologically.. Careful reading of the documents forces us to recognise that the Patrician Mission in Ireland falls into four periods. During the first (A.D. 432—439) St. Patrick was in sole charge of the Mission, and (after the winter 432—433, spent in Mag Inis) had a sort of headquarters in the neighbourhood of the royal residence at Tara, perhaps at Donaghpatrick, in Meath, where Prince Conaill, the High King's brother, having accepted his teaching had built a Donnach-mór ("great house of the Lord") for him. In 439 the *Annals of Ulster* inform us that "Secundinus, Auxilius and Isserninus, themselves bishops, were sent to Ireland to aid Patrick." It seems more likely that Secundinus was sent to replace him at the head of the Mission, and that the events leading up to this appointment are those referred to in the *Confession* (c. 26). This date, 439, is therefore the initial year of the second period (439—445) which ends with the establishment of Armagh (445), and the triumphant vindication of St. Patrick after an appeal to Pope Leo I. The third period (445—457) covers Patrick's career as Metropolitan, and ends with his resignation and retirement to Sabhall (probably because of the infirmities of age), and

the appointment as his successor in the Metropolitan See of Armagh of his beloved *dálta*, Benen.

The fourth period (457—461) is that of the quiet years of Sabhall, where, looking back on the strange story of his life, and realising that through all its vicissitudes God had “protected and comforted him as a father does his son,” the old saint pours forth his love and gratitude—in broken, stammering words indeed—but with a passion and sincerity which make the *Confession* of St. Patrick not less potent to stir our hearts than the book which perhaps inspired it, the immortal *Confessions* of St. Augustine.

I believe that by following the scheme set forth above, we shall find much that has remained puzzling and obscure in the life of the Apostle of Ireland (even after the labours of the great scholars who have spent themselves in its study) set in a new clear light.

If Patrick had hoped, as one gathers he did, to obtain from Laoghaire an invitation to establish himself at Tara, he was disappointed. But the tolerance of the High King for his Mission was so much gained. Fortified by it he set out to spread the Faith in the regions where the High King’s “writ ran.” We shall find him, then, during the seven years which represent the first period of his apostolate, active in territories ruled by relatives of the Ard-Rí : in Bregia and Meath, in Connacht, and in those portions of the old kingdom of Aileach, where the warrior sons of King Niall, Conall Gulban, Eoghan and Enna

had, not so long before, won sword lands for themselves.

At first, some of these princes showed, in spite of the High King's safe conduct, a savage hostility to the Apostle. Thus, at Taitlé (Tell-town), whither St. Patrick followed the men of Eire from Tara on the Easter Monday of 433 (hoping to find an opportunity to deliver his Master's message to the multitudes gathered for the Tailtean games) Prince Cairbre, brother of Laoghaire, under whose *aegis* the games were held, had the saint's attendants set upon, and beaten and "doused" in the Blackwater, and even plotted against the Apostle's life. At Uisneach, another celebrated "assembling place" of the descendants of Tuathal Teachtmhar, two other brothers of the High King, Fiacha and Enda tried to drive him away, and a nephew of theirs (called by Tirechán,<sup>1</sup> the son of Fiacc, the son of Niall) killed two of his Gallic companions. But Enda, afterwards, changed his attitude, and not only received Baptism himself from St. Patrick, but dedicated his infant son, Cormac, to the service of the sanctuary "together with his land, that is every ninth ridge of Enda's throughout Ireland."

It is to be remarked, too, that though Cairbre behaved so badly, his sons who had lands in what were called "the two Tethbias" received St. Patrick kindly, and granted him a site of a church for Southern Tethbia at Ardagh,<sup>2</sup> and for

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Armagh*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Here he left Bishops Mel and Melchu.

northern Tethbia, near Granard. Over this latter church our saint placed an old and well beloved friend of his, Bishop Guasacht, son of Miliucc ; and in a convent at Clonbroney, not far off, he placed two of Guasacht's sisters, the two Emers.<sup>3</sup> These were the children who had pitied the loneliness of their father's slave in the days of his servitude, the children whom he had secretly instructed in the truth, and whose voices swelled, mayhap, the chorus, heard in dreams, of the " children by the Western Sea " calling him back from a life of security, honour and comfort among his kinsmen "to walk once more amongst them."

Archbishop Healy is of opinion that " the two Emers were the first of that great host of Irish maidens who, in every age since that distant day, have given their pure young hearts to God " ; and that Clonbroney must be regarded as the first convent of nuns established in Ireland." That may be so, though it is difficult to prove it exactly, for the holy women who did such hard things for Christ in the Patrician mission formed such an integral part of that mission that it is well nigh impossible to establish priority of time in the matter of their establishment. That will be evident if we follow (guided by the *Tripartite*) our saint into the Meathian territory of Prince Conall Gulban (son of King Niall, and brother of King Laoghaire) where, as far as the available evidence enables us to reach a definite opinion, Patrick had a sort of missionary headquarters during the first period.

<sup>3</sup> *Tripl.* I., 87, 91.

Unlike some of his brothers, Prince Conall had nothing but welcome for St. Patrick from the first. The *Tripartite*<sup>4</sup> tells us that after his escape from Cairbre at Taillté the saint "went to Conall, son of Niall. Then was his place of abode in the place wherein stands Domnach Patraic to-day. And Conall received him with great joy, and Patrick baptized him. . . . Then did Conall measure out a church for Patrick with sixty feet of his feet." We are told also that the saint left his *leac*, or altar-stone, in this church, and "a number of his household," and this fact together with the persistence of his cognomen in the place name Donaghpatrick (Domnach Patraicc : the *Dominicum* or *Lord's House* of Patrick) suggests that, as I have said, it was his missionary base, as far as he had such a thing, in Meath.

From this base he made many other foundations in the Meathian districts which were under Prince Conall's rule. Thus at a place called in the *Tripartite*, *Vadum duarum Furcarum*<sup>5</sup> he founded a church where he left "three brothers, whose names show them to be Britons, I think : Cathacus (Cadoc?), Cathurus, and Catneus, and their sister, Catnea." This British lady (whose gentleness and sweetness gave rise to the pretty legends that the hinds allowed themselves to be milked by her) is the first we can trace of those holy virgins from over the seas who did so much

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* I., 71.

<sup>5</sup> Tirechán calls it "ad vadum molae" with the word "broon" in the margin. *B. of A.*, 19.

to win Eire for Christ. She had come with her missionary brothers to Ireland ; and while they ministered to the people, she looked after their modest household wants, and kept their little church spotless, and embroidered cloths for its altar, and had important duties to perform for the women neophytes on the occasion of their Baptism, and instructed the girls—and was busy in a thousand ways. Another holy woman mentioned in the *Tripartite*, as assigned to similar duty in another part of Meath, is the virgin Bice, or Bega, who with her brother, St. Lughaid, looked after the church near Lough Ennel, called Tech Laisrean, which was the “baptistry” of the “people of the east of Meath.”

It was, we have reason to believe, on the advice and with the co-operation of Prince Conall that St. Patrick made his bold attack on the “chief idol of Ireland.” The *Tripartite* tells the story in an impressive way :—

“ Thereafter Patrick went over the water [from Northern Teffia] to Mag Slecht, a place in which was the chief idol of Ireland—namely, Cenn Cruach, covered with gold and silver, and twelve other idols covered with brass about him. When Patrick saw the idol from the water named Guthard (‘ because he lifted his voice ’ there), and when he drew nigh to the idol, he raised his hand to put Jesus’ staff upon it, and reached it not, but      its right side, for to the south was its face—namely to Tara ; and the mark of the staff still remains in its left side, and yet the staff did not move out of Patrick’s hand. And

the earth swallowed up the twelve other images as far as their heads, and they [still] stand thus, in token of the miracles. And he cursed the demon and expelled him into hell. And Patrick summoned all those who adored the idol into the presence of King Laoghaire, and there he showed them the devil, and they feared they would all perish unless Patrick should cast him into hell.<sup>6</sup>

In the place where the idol had stood Patrick erected a church to the One True God, and he left in charge of it a relation of his own called Mabran<sup>7</sup> who was known by the strange *soubriquet*, "the Barbarian of St. Patrick." This may mean that he was of Teutonic or Slavonic origin, for two other "Barbari" are mentioned by Tirechán, whose names, Conleng and Ercleeng, seem to me to have a Teutonic flavour.

It would appear that in many of the districts evangelized in the initial year of his apostleship our saint left kinsmen of his own. Possibly they were bound to him by no nearer tie of relationship than that of common British blood. Thus we hear of Bishop Muinis in Forgnaidhe (Forgney), Bishops Mel and Melchu in Ardagh; Rioc in Inishbofin. These are all said to be brothers, and sons of Conis and Patrick's "sister" Darerca. These holy men had also, according to the *Tripartite*, sisters on the Mission: the virgin

<sup>6</sup> *Trip.* I., 91.

<sup>7</sup> Tirechán spells the name "Methbrain." The *Tript.* calls him "a relative of his and a prophet."

Eiche of Cell Glass, to the south of Ardagh, and Lalloc of Senlis in Connacht.

Cenn Cruach, or Crom Cruagh, seems to have been an idol of the Firbolgs, a tribe of whom called the *Masraidhe* occupied Magh Slecht. They are the "old peoples" referred to by the "Four Masters," under the year 464, as responsible for the death of Conall Gulban—and this was possibly in revenge for his part in helping St. Patrick to demolish their hereditary idol.

In such missionary activities the year between the Pasch of 433 and the Lent of 434 passed quickly, and the time drew near to make preparation for the celebration of Easter, and the baptism of the catechumens who had been under instruction for the great Sacrament. For at that period of the Church's history Baptism was conferred only at certain times—*viz.*, Easter, Pentecost, and the Epiphany (numbers being baptized on the same day); and the Easter ceremonies are, even to the present day, coloured by the fact that the solemn baptismal rites formed originally an integral part of them.

On this occasion the High King's tolerance (or perhaps his curiosity) stretched to the point of allowing the Easter solemnities to be carried out at Tara. Perhaps this was in compliment to his Chief Brehon, Erc, who was to receive Baptism at the hands of Patrick, having been rewarded by the gift of Faith, for his courteous and loyal demeanour towards Patrick at Slane on the first Easter Saturday.

A fountain on Tara called by Tirechán "Loigles," and interpreted by him the "Calf of the Cities," had been blessed by St. Patrick for the baptismal font, and the ceremony had attracted a large number of nobles from various parts of Ireland.

Among these were two noblemen, who apparently had met before in Tara, but did not know each other's name. One of them enquired of the second what he was called, and whence he came. The answer came, holding a name at which the heart of Patrick would stir "were it dust in an earthy bed"—the sacred name of Focluth Wood, musical with the dream voices of "the children by the Western Sea." "Enda, am I," replied the person interrogated, "son of Amolngidh, son of Fechrach, son of Echach; from the western shores, from the plain of Dommon, and from the Wood of Fochloth." "Now when Patrick," says Tirechán, "heard the name of the Wood of Fochloth, he rejoiced greatly, and said to Enda, 'I will accompany thee back, if I am alive, because the Lord bade me go.'" Enda, terrified at the proposal, tried to dissuade the saint, saying that they might both be ambushed and killed. But Patrick assured him that his own company was the best security Enda could have; "of a truth thou thyself shalt never reach thy country alive, if I come not with thee, nor shalt thou have eternal life; because it was on my account that thou didst come hither."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Book of Armagh*, p. 20.

Thus in the company of Prince Enda did St. Patrick make his first missionary journey to Connacht, whither his apostle's heart had flown so oft in dreams long years before. At Fochloth he built a "Domnach Mór" which for centuries retained his name. This church he placed in charge of two brothers, Cethiacus (a bishop) and Mucneus, and Enda gave his young son Conall to be nurtured by the holy men in the Christian Faith. A charming tradition identifies the "children" whose sweet voices had called Patrick to that far western land with the two maidens Crebriu and Lesru, daughters of Gleru, son of Cunmene. "It is they," writes the *Tripartite* "that called to St. Patrick out of their mother's womb, when he was in the isles of the Tyrrhene Sea." The story goes on that our saint consecrated their virginity to God and built a little convent for them at a place called Cell Forgland, west of the Moy, in the territory of the sons of Amolngidh.

" On a cliff  
Where Fochlut's Wood blackened the northern  
sea  
A convent rose. Therein these sisters twain  
Whose cry had summoned Patrick o'er the deep,  
Abode, no longer weepers              Sweet  
Their psalms amid the clangour of rough brine."

The story of the "sisters twain" of Fochlut Wood calls to mind the story of another exquisite sister pair, the Princesses Ethne the Fair and

Fedelm the Ruddy, twin roses white and red, on the royal stem of Ireland's kings. But it were best to keep their story for the special chapter in which we shall treat of Patrick's work for the women of Ireland.

It is said that our saint made three missionary journeys in Connacht, that he spent seven years in it, and established fifty churches in it, and loved it greatly. "Thrice," says the *Tripartite*,<sup>9</sup> "did Patrick wend across the Shannon into the land of Connacht. Fifty bells, and fifty chalices and fifty altar-cloths he left in it, each in its own church. Seven years was he a-preaching to the men of Connacht, and he left his blessing with them when he departed." To the years in Connacht his thoughts turned gladly when in his old age he sat him down to write his *Confession*, and he lived over again in fond recollection his journeyings "through many perils, even to outlying regions beyond which no men dwelt, and where never had anyone come to baptize, or ordain clergy, or confirm the people," and where he had "by the bounty of God, initiated everything carefully and very gladly."<sup>10</sup>

We can find room for mention of only a few of the "fifty churches," for the "christianities" which radiated their clear white light through the druid shadows which had hitherto lain heavy on that western land. At Elphin (where our saint left Assicus, and his nephew Bite, and the latter's mother, Cipia, widow of the brother of Assicus)

<sup>9</sup> *Tript.* I., p. 147.

<sup>10</sup> *Conf.* 51.

the land for the foundation was the gift of a druid called Ono. "The holy bishop Assicus," says the *Tripartite*, "was St. Patrick's copper-smith, and he made altars and quadrangular *miasa* (patens), and quadrangular book-covers for St. Patrick," specimens of which were carefully conserved for centuries in Armagh, Elphin, and at Domnach Mór Maige Seolai, near Headfort, Co. Galway.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the Patrician churches were called *Domnach* from the Latin word *Dominicum*, signifying Lord's House. But one place-name in Co. Roscommon bears witness to the fact that some of our saint's Gallic helpers founded a church imposing enough to be denominated a *basilica*.<sup>12</sup> The names of some of them are given in the *Tripartite*: Bernicius, Hibernicius and Hernicus; and we are told they had a sister with them called Nitria.

At a place called Duma Selce, belonging to the Uí Briuin (i.e., the descendants of Brian, an elder brother of Niall of the Nine Hostages) the Apostle appears to have held a sort of synod, for we find in his company there "Brón the bishop of Caissel Irre [whose name still survives in the place-name Kill-espug-Brone, near Sligo town]; Bite, Sachellus, Brochaid (brother of Lomman of Trim); Bronach, a priest, Rodán, Cassán, Benen [Patrick's successor] another Benen, brother of Cethech, bishop Felart, and two sisters of the latter, who were holy virgins."

<sup>11</sup> *Triph.* I., 97.

<sup>12</sup> Mod. *Basilic*, a parish in Co. Roscommon.

In commemoration of this convention our saint set up three stones, and on them the sacred Name in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin: *Iesus*, *Soter*, *Saluator*.<sup>13</sup>

It occurs to us that the meeting of these bishops and priests, all staunch friends of the saint, though men of differing nationalities, may have had its *raison d'être* in the events which we are now to chronicle, and which led for a time, if my reading of the documentary evidence is right, to the supersession of St. Patrick at the head of the mission by Secundinus. A curious passage in Tirechán shows Secundinus " apart under a leafy elm " when our saint was erecting Senchell at Topur Mucno,<sup>14</sup> and suggests that Secundinus, sent to Ireland with Auxilius and Isserninus by the "Seniors" in Gaul, came all the way to Connacht to announce the commands of these "Seniors" to St. Patrick, and was not too warmly received by the faithful followers of the latter. That picture of the new bishop from Gaul standing "all alone and apart under a leafy elm" at Senchell is very eloquent. Perhaps a previous passage in Tirechán which tells of the "departure from Patrick" of the Franks who founded *Basilica* (*Basic*) may be a fragment of the same story. One gathers the impression that St. Patrick's Irish biographers thought it derogat-

<sup>13</sup> *Triþ.* I., 107.

<sup>14</sup> "And Patrick went to Topur Mucno, and erected Senchell. And Secundinus was (there) apart and alone under a leafy elm." (*Triþ.* I., 111). "Et perrexit Patricius ad fontem quod dicitur mucno . . . et fuit Secundinus solus sub ulmo frondoso separatum." (*Tir. B. of A.*, 25.)

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tory of their great Patron's honour to hint that he had ever had any difficulties with his superiors, was ever called to stern account by them, on charges which, if not inspired by malice, were inspired by prejudice, that he had hostile critics and non-friends among his fellow-workers who (as I suggest) actually succeeded for a time in getting him deposed from his place at the head of the mission. Only hints and fragments of the story survive in the Irish accounts, "fossilised," as it were, into them, and extremely puzzling to all commentators, who do not read them in the light of the frank admissions of the *Confession*.

For St. Patrick himself made no secret of the fact that he had been "rejected" by his superiors, and put to shame openly by a disloyal friend ; and closer to our hearts than the great *Thaumaturgus* blazing his mission trail with miracles and marvels is the Patrick "sore thrust at, and trampled on," whose sorrows we are now to chronicle.

## *Chapter XI.—The Testing Furnace.*



THE charges made against St. Patrick, as far as we can judge from the *Confession*, were mainly two. One was his want of culture, his defective education. The "lordly rhetoricians"—*dominicati rhetorici*—whom we have found in great numbers in Lérins, Arles and Auxerre, were plainly of opinion that this man who could not write Latin without innumerable solecisms for which one of their own schoolboys would have received the correction of the ferule, was not the proper person to place in charge of an important mission to the highly aristocratic and cultured *Scotti*. A second charge seems to have had something to do with the finances of the mission; for in several chapters of the *Confession*, and notably in Chapters 49, 50, 52, 53, our saint defends himself vigorously against an implied accusation of not having been disinterested in his dealings with his converts. He has no difficulty in proving that he has acted with almost extreme circumspection in these delicate matters. He did not hesitate to hurt the feelings of the "Christian brethren and virgins of Christ and religious women" by returning to them the little gifts they had brought him, and

their jewels which they had " cast upon the altar." He defies anyone to prove that from any among the " many thousands of men " whom he baptized he ever accepted " half a scruple," or from any among the clergy whom he ordained everywhere he claimed " even the price of his shoe." On the contrary, he has always " spent " instead of receiving, and the indication of the expense thus incurred throws a curious light on the conditions in which his missionary activities had to be carried on : lavish gifts to kings, fees for the armed escort of their sons, and generous " retainers " and " refreshers " for the brehons, or lawyers, of the districts most frequented by him. How the very considerable sums required for these purposes were raised does not clearly appear. Probably much aid was received from Britain, and above all from Gaul, where charitable people were accustomed to give to the heads of monasteries large sums for various good works, such as the redemption of captives and the relief of the destitute. Generous souls, such as these donations pre-suppose, would gladly respond to the appeal of the great epoch-making enterprise which was the Mission to Ireland.

The charges against St. Patrick, of whatever nature they were, might not have led to the extreme step of deposing him from his post at the head of the Mission had it not been for the abominable disloyalty of a man, described by the saint himself as his " dearest friend," who, in a council called to discuss his case, had actually made public a boyish fault of our Apostle which,

in the torturing scruples and self questionings which preceded his ordination to the Deaconship, he had confessed to the companion he trusted most, and loved most dearly.

It is important to quote in full the chapters of the *Confession* dealing with these incidents, after which we will discuss their implications.

"And when" (the saint writes in Chapters 26 and 27 of the *Confession*), "I was assailed by not a few of my 'seniors,' who came and [urged] my sins against my laborious episcopate, certainly on that day *I was sore thrust of that I might fall here and in eternity*. But the Lord graciously spared the *stranger and sojourner for His name's sake*, and He helped me exceedingly when I was thus trampled on, so that I did not fall badly into disgrace and reproach. I pray God that it be not reckoned to them as sin.

"After the lapse of thirty years they found as an occasion against me a matter which I had confessed before I was a deacon. Because of anxiety, with a sorrowful mind I disclosed to my dearest friend what I had done in my youth, one day, nay in one hour, because I was not yet able to prevail. I cannot tell, God knoweth, if I was then fifteen years old; and I did not believe in the living God, nor had I since my infancy, but I remained in death and in unbelief until I had been chastened exceedingly, and humbled in truth by hunger and nakedness and that daily."

But God did not forsake His humble follower at this crisis, and the very night after the Council of "Seniors" at which he was "rejected," he

had a comforting vision, the interpretation of which he only grasped afterwards. He saw spread out before him a document depriving him of his rank (" a writing void of honour opposite my face ! "). But at the same time he heard the Voice of God making our Patrick's sorrow His sorrow, and Patrick's hurt at the " unfaith " of a friend *His* hurt : " And I heard the response of God saying to me : ' We have seen with anger the face of so-and-so '—mentioning the name—[which, by the way, Patrick himself was too chivalrous to put on record in his *Confession*]. Nor did He say thus : ' Thou hast seen with anger ' ; but ' we have seen with anger,' as if in that matter He had joined Himself with me. As He hath said : *He that toucheth you is as he that toucheth the apple of mine eye.*"

" But I am the rather grieved for my dearest friend that we should have merited to hear such a verdict as that. A man to whom I had even entrusted my soul ! "

These passages of the *Confession* give us a very clear idea of the proceedings of the Council at which the charges made against Patrick were formally tried. Where it was held—whether in Gaul or Britain—is not known, and whether he himself was present to meet his accusers, and undertake his own defence does not clearly emerge. I am inclined to think that he was not—that he was actually in far-away Connacht, when the decision of his Superiors was announced to him, and that it was announced to him by the

person appointed by the Council to supersede him—Secundinus.<sup>1</sup>

Under the date 439 the *Annals of Ulster* record the arrival in Ireland of "Secundus [recté Secundinus], Auxilius and Serninus [Isserninus] themselves also bishops, *in aid of Patrick.*" In view of this definite assertion it takes some courage to maintain that they came to supersede him ; but I believe that an attentive study of the situation and of the sequence of relevant events chronicled in the *Annals*, and in other documents, pleads powerfully for placing at this juncture the official "disgrace" of Patrick of which his own *Confession* supplies irrefutable evidence.

Most of his Irish biographers (who, as we have seen, prefer to pass over in silence the temporary eclipse of our saint) represent Secundinus as a nephew of St. Patrick, making him a son of Restitutus—described either as a "bard" or a "Lombard"—and Darerca, who, in spite of her Irish name, is reckoned amongst our Apostle's numerous sisters. One argument which weighs heavily against the alleged relationship between Secundinus and Patrick is that Secundinus was a much older man than his supposed "uncle." He must have been a man of sixty-seven when he arrived in Ireland, for the *Annals of Ulster* chronicling his death eight years later (A.D. 447) speak of it as occurring in his seventy-fifth year. In 439, as well as we

<sup>1</sup> Evidence of the presence of Secundinus in Connacht is to be found in the curious phrase of *Tirechan* and the *Tripartite* already quoted.

can calculate, Patrick's age was, in or about, fifty. It is possible, of course, for a nephew to be seventeen years older than his uncle—but Patrick's family history as far as we know it, authoritatively, makes it difficult to believe that he had a sister (and one called by such an Irish name as Darerca) married to "a Lombard" at least eighteen years before his own birth. The truth is that there is no reliance to be placed in most of the "information" supplied about Secundinus. All that we can assert, with relative confidence, about him was that he was a man of letters and a poet. Perhaps he was chosen for the headship of the mission on that account, for, as we have seen, one of the complaints against St. Patrick was that of his "*rusticitas*." Manitius<sup>2</sup> identifies Secundinus with a Gallo-Roman poet of the same name, praised highly by Sidonius Apollinaris, the cultured Bishop of Clermont, as "a composer of hexameters, an excellent master of the hendecasyllable, a composer of satires." But the known dates of our Secundinus, and especially that of his death in 447, forbid this identification, as also one attempted with the Secundinus who competed with Constantius, author of the celebrated *Life of St. Germanus* and Sidonius Apollinaris in the composition of poems to be inserted in the walls of the splendid church erected by St. Patiens in his episcopal city of Lyons.<sup>3</sup> The only poem we can confidently ascribe to Secundinus is the

<sup>2</sup> *Geschichte der Christ. Lat. Poesie*, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> Probably these two indications refer to the one person,

alphabetical Latin hymn, called from its opening *Audite Omnes*; and it is very curious, and interesting, in view of the thesis I am here endeavouring to establish, that the scholiast of the *Liber Hymnorum* describes the poem as a sort of " peace offering " of Secundinus—the seal of a reconciliation following a misunderstanding about mission finances. It is also very interesting to note that while Patrick was never able to get a permanent footing in the neighbourhood of Tara, Secundinus built *his* church within a short distance of the royal hill at the place which still keeps the name it got from the Irish form of his, Domnach Sechnaill, or Dunshaughlin. The fact seems to suggest that to the High King Secundinus was *persona grata*, while Patrick had been barely tolerated—and it makes us suspect that Laoghaire, himself, was possibly behind the forces which led to St. Patrick's temporary deposition.

Of the two companions of Secundinus, Auxilius and Isserninus, we know even less than of their chief. They were both clerics of the church of Auxerre, and Muirchu<sup>4</sup> mentions the interesting circumstance that the day which witnessed St. Patrick's consecration as a bishop, they received minor Orders. A story enshrined in the *Book of Armagh* indicates that Isserninus when chosen for the Irish Mission went very unwillingly. If he was sent to help to " depose " St. Patrick his reluctance is easy to understand, though the story turns on his being chosen for the Irish

<sup>4</sup> I., 9.

Mission at the same time as Patrick himself. Dr. Bury, on the strength of Isserninus having an Irish name, "Bishop Fith," states that he was an Irishman, and gives his birthplace as "in the neighbourhood of Clonmore, on the borders of Carlow and Wicklow," but I am not quite sure that the passage in the *Additions to Tirechán* in the *Book of Armagh*, from which he makes this deduction, necessarily imposes it.<sup>5</sup> The name Fith may possibly stand for the noun *féth*, "calm,"<sup>6</sup> and would be a translation of Serenus, one of the variants of the missioner's name.

Auxilius, the second companion of Secundinus, is described as his brother, and one of the numerous sons of "Restitutus the Lombard" and St. Patrick's sister—but on these "genea-

5 "Patrick and Iserninus, that is Bishop Fith, were with Germanus in the city Olsiodra (Auxerre). But Germanus said to Iserninus that he should come (hither) into Ireland to preach. And he was ready to obey to whatsoever part he should be sent except to Ireland. Germanus said to Patrick: 'And thou, wilt thou be obedient?' Patrick said: 'Be it so if thou wishest.' Germanus said: 'This shall be between you, and Iserninus will not be able to avoid passing into Ireland.' Patrick came into Ireland; howbeit Iserninus was sent into another region, but a contrary wind brought him to the southern part of Ireland. Thereafter he went to his province, a small tribe in Cliu, named Catrige."—*Add to Tirechán*.

6 This is suggested by a note to Kuno Meyer's *Learning in Ireland in the Fifth Century* (p. 23). Speaking of the alleged "Scottic" origin of Mansuetus, Bishop of Toul (circa 350), he suggests that "Mansuetus" may be "a Latinization of the Irish name Fethgno, which was so Latinized in the case of a bishop of Armagh in the 9th century. . . . In such Latinizations as in Cormac's etymologies, no attention was paid to the quantity of vowels. For though Fethgno is confounded with *fid*, "wood," the rendering, *Mansuetus* is based upon the assumption that the first word represents the noun *fèth*, "calm."

logies" no reliance can be placed. He, too, had an Irish name—Cobair (= aid or help), and he has given his Latin name to the church of Kill-ossy (now Killishea—*i.e.*, Cill Ausaille), not far from Naas.

And now we must think of our Apostle as the Patrick of the *Confession* remembers himself—"sore thrust at," put to shame before his brethren, and wounded to the heart by the disloyalty of the man to whom he had entrusted even his soul.

In this dark hour he turned, as the young slave boy of Miliucc had learned to turn, amid the hunger and privations and loneliness of exile, to the One Friend Who never betrays our trust, the Friend Whose ever abiding companionship had made the wintry slopes of Slemish dearer to him than even the blossom-scented groves of Lérins. He had always loved mountains and solitudes, one imagines, and during the years in Lérins he had often sought from Abbot Honoratus permission to retire for a while from the common life to share with the hermit monks of Capo Rosso the heavenly consolations of their "desert."

And now in this crisis of his life he turned to the mountains once more for their peace and healing. He walked, the first of its uncounted hosts of *peregrini*, the pilgrim road from Aghagower to the "Rick" that ever since has borne his name instead of that of the eagles from whom he had wrested its sovereignty, and straightway set his face

Alone to that great hill " of eagles " named,  
 Huge Cruachan, that o'er the western deep  
 Hung through sea-mist, with shadowing crag on  
 crag,  
 High-ridged, and endless forest long since dead.

There are few more grandiose and awe-inspiring pictures in hagiography than that which the *Tripartite* has drawn for us of the great " Athlete of Christ " wrestling with the Angel through the unremitting fasts and prayers of forty days and nights for the salvation of the men and women of Eire. But the message of Croaghpatrick will come to us all, clearer and truer, and more comforting still, if we think of the lonely figure on its high uplifted cone fighting, first of all, for his own soul.

Poignant phrases in the *Confession* let us share in the anguish of that fight, the gladness of the victory won from it. " I ought not to hide the gift of God which He bestowed upon us in the land of my captivity ; because then I earnestly sought Him, and there I found Him, and He preserved me from all iniquities. This is my belief, because of His indwelling spirit Who hath worked in me until this day. . . . Hence, therefore, I render unwearied thanks to my God Who kept me faithful in the day of my temptation so that to-day I can confidently offer to Him a sacrifice, as a living victim, my soul to Christ my Lord Who saved me out of all my troubles so that I may say : ' Who am I, O Lord, or what

is my *calling*, that Thou hast disclosed such Divine power to me? so that to-day among the heathen I should steadfastly exalt and magnify Thy name wherever I may be; and that not only in prosperity but also in afflictions, so that whatever may happen to me whether good or bad, I ought to receive it with an equal mind, and ever render thanks to God Who shewed me that I might trust Him endlessly, as one that cannot be doubted.' "

In another passage of the *Confession* still dealing with this painful episode of his career the saint refers to a "journey on which he had resolved."

I believe that this "journey" was none other than that to Rome, which Dr. Bury assigns to the year 441—and for which he seeks the *raison d'être* in St. Patrick's desire "to report the success of his labours" to the newly-ordained Pope Leo I, "to enlist his personal sympathy, to gain his formal approbation, his moral support, and his advice."<sup>7</sup> It seems to me that St. Patrick had a yet more urgent reason for going to Rome at this juncture—and that he went there to appeal to the Head of the Church himself, from the decision of the Council which had deposed him from his place at the head of the Irish Mission, and put in his place Secundinus.

One of the records on which Dr. Bury relies for evidence of St. Patrick's journey to Rome is taken from the *Annals of Ulster*:

<sup>7</sup> Bury: *St. Patrick*, p. 153.

" A.D. 441—Leo is ordained bishop of the Church of Rome, and Patrick the bishop was approved in the Catholic faith."

" Approved in the faith "—the very words are an echo of St. Patrick's own in that passage of the *Confession* in which he tells us of the " journey on which he had resolved "—when he was " rejected " by his Seniors, and publicly shamed by his disloyal friend. They come as a confirmation, so pat as to be almost startling, of the thesis I am trying to establish :—

" Therefore, I render thanks to Him Who hath strengthened me in all things, so as not to hinder me from *the journey on which I had resolved*, and from my labour which I had learnt from Christ my Lord ; but rather I felt in myself no little virtue proceeding from him, *and my faith has been approved in the sight of God and of men.*"<sup>8</sup>

That our Apostle made " a journey " in that crisis of his missionary career into which the *Confession* gives us such a vivid glimpse we know, therefore, on his own authority. That Rome was the journey's end we may deduce (as Dr. Bury has done) from a passage of Tirechán<sup>9</sup> who tells us that his travelling companion was Sachellus " ordained " by the saint himself in the Eternal City, and who seems to have afterwards supplanted in Baslic " the Gauls," who were its original founders. The evidence of the

<sup>8</sup> *Conf.* 30.

<sup>9</sup> *Book of Armagh*, p. 17.

*Annals of Ulster* points to the date of that journey to Rome as shortly after the accession of the great Pontiff Leo I to the comharbship of St. Peter; and the words used by the Annalist, echoing the words of Saint Patrick himself, indicate as one of the fruits of that journey the triumphant vindication of our Apostle from the charges of his accusers. For the opinion that this appeal to Rome was resolved on by St. Patrick during that memorable Lent which our Apostle spent "in the ecstatic passion of his prayer" on "the Rock" we have the support of the *Tripartite*,<sup>10</sup> which thus helps us to fix the date as the Lent of 440—a very significant date indeed if we remember that it followed immediately that of the arrival in Ireland of Secundinus. In this connection it is interesting to observe that the thesis I am trying to establish meets satisfactorily one of the objections of Lanigan to the Croaghpatrick tradition of a whole Lent (with a few days added) spent by our Apostle amid the clouds and storms of that historic Mount. Our very exact and critical historian finds it difficult to picture the saint "absenting himself from his converts during the whole of a time, which according to the universal practice of the Church particularly required the presence of a bishop

<sup>10</sup> *Tripl.* I., 85. It is true that the *Tripartite* (though it tells us in another place (I., 75, that St. Patrick "went thrice to Rome") says he sent his nephew Muinis on this occasion. It confirms, however, the fact of the appeal to Rome, and places it in connection with St. Patrick's Lent on Cruachan: "When Patrick was in Cruachan Aigle he sent Muinis to Rome for council to the Abbot of Rome, and relics were given him."

among his people." "Such a retirement," Lanigan points out, "would have answered very well for a hermit, but would not have suited St. Patrick who, in the then thriving state of his mission, would have been better employed in preparing his Catechumens for baptism at Easter, and those who were already baptized for a worthy celebration of that great solemnity." If St. Patrick had been temporarily "suspended" from his post at the head of the Irish Mission, and his place taken by Secundinus, it is easy enough to see how he got leisure for that long Lent on the Rick—and was also able to absent himself from his converts in Ireland for the lengthened period required by a journey to Rome.

#### POSTSCRIPT TO CHAP. XI.

I may also remark in this connection, that the view of things I am advocating offers a solution of a problem set by at least three of the lists of the "Coarbs of Patrick"—*viz.*, the identity of "Sen Patraic," who is placed third on the list, between Secundinus and Benignus.

In these lists the first four names run thus, each followed by the number of years of his occupancy of the post of head of the Irish Church :

| <i>List from the<br/>Psalter of Cashel</i>        | <i>Lebar Breco List</i>                              | <i>List from Yellow<br/>Book of Lecan</i>                  | <i>Book of Leinster</i>                               |
|---|--|--|---|
| Patraic<br>Sechnaill VI<br>Senpatric X<br>Benen X | Patrick XIII<br>Sechuaill<br>Benen<br>Hierlathi XIII | Patraic XXII<br>Sechnaill XIII<br>Sen Patraic X<br>Benen X | Patraic<br>Sechnall XIII<br>Sen Patraic II<br>Benin X |

I believe that "Sen Patraic" is simply "a doubling" of Patraic Mac Calpuairn, and that the mistake of dividing his individuality into two personalities arose from a misconception of the situation, with regard to the temporary supersession of Patrick by Secundinus, and his subsequent restitution to the headship of the Irish Church. The years given in the first list (which is the most authoritative, having been copied by John O'Clery in 1454 from the ancient *Psaltair of Cashel*), corresponds pretty well to the dates supplied by the *Annals of Ulster*. Thus the six years of Sechnaill's "reign" would be those between his arrival in 439, and the foundation of Armagh in 445. The ten years of "Sen Patraic's" reign corresponds with the period between 447 (*An. of Ulster* date of Secundinus's death) and the retirement of our Apostle from the active duties of the Chief Pastor. The ten years given to Benen's reign corresponds to those between 457 and 467, *Annals of Ulster date of his death.*

## *Chapter XII.—Ireland and Rome.*



HAT visit of St. Patrick to Rome of which the scattered "jig-saw puzzle" pieces of evidence, thus fitted together, are found to form a convincing whole, was to have remarkable consequences, not only for our Apostle himself, but for the Irish Church.

It will be remembered that up to this period, Ireland, from the point of view of ecclesiastical status and organization, was "a Mission." St. Patrick himself and the clerics under him were clearly subject to the jurisdiction of a missionary headquarters in Gaul, which the available evidence makes us think was probably situated at Auxerre. For its part, the See of Auxerre was subject to the jurisdiction of the See of Arles, to which Pope Zozimus at the time of Bishop Patroculus (the immediate predecessor of St. Honoratus) had granted a sort of "intermediation" between the episcopate of Gaul and the Apostolic See. M. Georges Goyau holds that this "intermediation" was granted to prevent the growing custom of the Gallic churches of appealing to Milan instead of Rome. The metropolitan of Arles exercised, on the part of the Apostolic See, a jurisdiction in Church

matters over those portions of the Western Empire once embraced by the Prefecture of the Gauls, and the "intermediation of Arles" paralleled, in the ecclesiastical sphere, the delegated power exercised, in the civil sphere, by the Prefect of the Praetorium on behalf of the Emperor. The Pope was the supreme ruler, the Bishop of Arles, his delegate for the "Prefecture of the Gauls" (taking the term in its widest geographical extension), and the Bishop of Auxerre, as a sub-delegate, exercised a sort of supervision over the Church of Britain and the Mission in Ireland—having been chosen for this work by Pope Celestine "at the instigation of Palladius,"<sup>1</sup> as we have seen.

Now, it can be shown, I think, that the journey of St. Patrick to Rome led directly to the establishment of the Irish Church as an ecclesiastical "Province," emancipated from the supervision of Auxerre, and the intermediation of Arles, and directly under the jurisdiction of Rome. The *Annals of Ulster* give evidence of this fact in a famous entry which Todd and others have strangely misunderstood. Under the date A.D. 443 we read in that chronicle: "Patrick, the Bishop, flourishing in the ardour of the Faith, and the Doctrine of Christ in our Province." The word "Province" is here used in an ecclesiastical sense, and signifies that the Irish Church has been raised by the Pope from "a Mission" to its full status as an ecclesiastical "Province" with its own metro-

<sup>1</sup> *Prosper Chron.*, 429.

politan. The reference to Patrick "flourishing in the ardour of the Faith, and the Doctrine of Christ" echoes the evidence of the earlier entry (under date A.D. 441) "Leo is ordained Bishop of Rome, and Patrick, the Bishop, was approved in the Catholic Faith" clearly by Pope St. Leo himself.

The date of the later entry would give the date of the return of St. Patrick from Rome as 443, and indicate that he spent two years on the journey and in his sojourn in the Eternal City. Now the next date in the *Annals of Ulster*, read in this light is very significant :

A.D. 444 : "Ard-Macha was founded. From the building of Rome to the founding of this city is 1194 years."

About the time of St. Patrick's sojourn in Rome, certain differences had arisen between the new occupant of the Chair of Peter, Leo the Great, and the successor of St. Honoratus in the See of Arles, St. Hilarius. In 444 Hilarius presiding over a Council of the Bishops of Gaul, deposed Celodonius, Bishop of Besançon, against whom certain charges had been made. The deposed Bishop immediately appealed to Rome, and before a Council called expressly to consider his case, succeeded in establishing his innocence of the charges made against him, which Hilarius had taken as proved without sufficient evidence. At the same time the appellant took the offensive by charging, on his side, the Bishop of Arles

with certain arbitrary and high-handed acts, one of which, especially, made the Pope very angry. The case was made against Hilary that during the illness of a certain Bishop Projectus, the Bishop of Arles had actually consecrated another bishop to replace him.

The consequence was that the Pope wrote a Decretal Letter by which he replaced in their Sees the deposed Bishops and deprived the See of Arles of the "intermediation." This was followed by a "Constitution" of the Emperor Valentinian III taking formal cognisance of this state of affairs, and affirming once more the exclusive authority of the Holy See in such matters.

The date of the "Constitution" of Valentinian is that of the foundation of Armagh; and it is easy to see that the two things may have had more connection than any historian has yet found in it. The abolition by the Pope of the "Intermediation" of the See of Arles was favourable to the emancipation of the Irish Church from the status of a Mission, and its establishment as an Ecclesiastical Province, under the immediate jurisdiction of Rome. And this important event is that which is definitely chronicled in the *Annals of Ulster* in an item which has puzzled most commentators.

It will be remembered, too, that in addition to the dangers to the Papal Supremacy liable to arise from the "Intermediation" of Arles, which led to the abolition of the latter, the orthodoxy of the Lérins School (with which Arles was so closely

identified, through its two Bishops, Honoratus and Hilary), was at that time in Rome under grave suspicion. The charges of Semi-Pelagianism levelled against some of its most distinguished members, especially Abbot Faustus (afterwards Bishop of Riez) does not directly concern us here. But they may explain, in part, why the *Annals of Ulster* lay such stress on the purity of doctrine of St. Patrick, of which our Apostle seems to have obtained from Pope St. Leo the formal testimony.

"Approved, therefore, in the Catholic Faith," "flourishing in the ardour of the Faith and the Doctrine of Christ," St. Patrick found himself, by the immediate action of the Pope, at the head of the newly established Ecclesiastical "Province" of all Ireland, and returned from Rome, victorious not only in his appeal from the Gallic "elders" who had deposed him, but clothed with the new dignity of "Metropolitan," and authorized to establish his "Metropolis." We can understand, now, why he laid such stress on Roman usage—both as to the use of the *Kyrie Eleison*, *Christe Eleison*, the Roman tonsure, the Roman Paschal Table, and above all why he decreed that cases of such difficulty that they could not be decided at Armagh should be referred to Rome.<sup>2</sup> "Ecclesia Scottorum, immo Romanorum, ut Christiani ita ut Romani sitis" is the injunction of his famous dictum in the *Book of Armagh*, and why St. Patrick thus specially emphasised the position of his Church with

<sup>2</sup> See "Canons" of St. Patrick.

respect to Rome is made clear by a consideration of the circumstances in which his Metropolis was founded.

It is pleasant to find evidence that Secundinus and his assistants, Auxilius and Isserninus, accepted the new order of things without difficulty. Shortly after the establishment of Armagh the new Metropolitan called them together, and in the first Council ever held in the Irish Church Secundinus and Auxilius with Patrick and Benignus issued decrees asserting, first, the primacy of the See of Armagh, and secondly the supremacy of the Chair of St. Peter in Rome over the See of Armagh itself, as well as over all prelates and judges in Ireland : “ Also, if any very difficult case shall arise, impossible to be decided by the Judges of the tribes of the Scots it is duly to be referred to the See of the Archbishop of the Irish, that is Patrick, and to the examination of that Prelate. But if in that See with its sages it cannot be easily decided, then the cause of the matter aforesaid, we decree, is to be referred to the Apostolic See, that is to the Chair of Peter, having authority over the City of Rome.”

To celebrate the “ reconciliation ” of St. Patrick and St. Secundinus the latter composed a famous hymn in praise of St. Patrick, the *Audite Omnes*, the preface to which in the *Liber Hymnorum* describes it as “ the first hymn that was made in Ireland,” and also bears testimony to the fact that it was a “ peace offering ” of Secundinus : “ *causa pacis fecit* ”—though it

ascribes the difference between the two prelates to a different cause.<sup>3</sup>

This " peace making " between St. Patrick and St. Secundinus is bound up with a gracious memory which it is particularly fitting to recall at this moment. As the two saints were going round the cemetery (at Dunshaughlin) " they heard a choir of angels singing around the oblation in the church ; and what they sang was the hymn beginning ' Sancti venite, Christi Corpus sumite,' hence this hymn is sung in Ireland when one goes to the Body of Christ from that time onward." And thus the lovely Eucharistic hymn, which Father Thurston held is the oldest Eucharistic hymn in Europe, which was sung in the monasteries of the great Columban, and resounded melodiously in Faremoutiers when the Abbess Burgundofara and her sisters were going to Holy Communion, is associated with the very foundations of the Irish Church.

Secundinus did not long survive these events. His death is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* under date A.D. 447 " The repose of St. Secundinus in the 75th year of his age."

Of his companions Auxilius and Isserninus we shall learn more in later chapters of this book.

It is significant that St. Patrick when seeking a site for his " civitas " should have found it not near the political capital, the seat of the High King at Tara, but near the ancient capital of the

<sup>3</sup> It is significant that there is in the *Hymn* a re-iteration of the tribute to the purity of Patrick's Catholicity. " Testis Domini fidelis in lege catholica."

Kingdom of Ulaidh at Ard-Macha. That he was guided by some very powerful motive in the selection of the location is almost certain ; but what that reason was we, at this distance of time, and with our present want of knowledge, cannot determine.

About a century before the arrival of St. Patrick in Ireland the old Ulidian kings had been driven from their royal fortress at Emain Macha by "the three Collas"—a collateral branch of the dynasty which ruled at Tara. But at the time when St. Patrick set up his metropolitan Church there, the representative of Colla dá Crích was, if the only story which survives of him in Muirchu is to be relied on, a very undistinguished and simple-minded Prince called Dáire. What his relations to the older races (with which St. Patrick was very closely allied through his establishments in Mag Inis and his friendship with Dichu), and what his position with regard to Tara we cannot say. Probably he was neutral ; and the fact may have had much influence in deciding St. Patrick to set up in Dáire's territory, the Metropolitan Church from which he was to exercise his primatial authority over all Ireland.

Of the foundation of Armagh Muirchu tells a quaint and appealing story, which shows above all the impression made by St. Patrick on his Irish converts through his disinterestedness and steadfastness :

" There was in the country of Airthir (Orior) a certain rich and honourable man called Dáire. To him Patrick made request that he would grant

him some place for the exercise of religion. And the rich man said to the saint : What place dost thou desire ? I desire, said the saint, that thou grant me the high ground which is called 'The Ridge of the Willow' ; and I shall build there a place. But he was unwilling to give the saint that high ground ; but he gave him another place on lower ground where is now *Fertae Martyrum* near Ardd Machae ; and there St. Patrick dwelt with his people.

" Now some time after there came a horseman of Dáire's, leading his wonderful horse to graze on the grass land of the Christians—and Patrick was offended at the horse trespassing in this way on his ground ; and he said Dáire has done a foolish thing in sending brute beasts to disturb the little holy place which he gave to God. But the horseman was ' like a deaf man and heard not, and as one that is dumb who doth not open his mouth ' ; and he said nothing, but went away leaving the horse there for the night. But on the next day, when the horseman came in the morning to see his horse he found it dead. So he went back home in grief, and said to his lord, ' Lo, that Christian has killed thy horse ; he was annoyed at the disturbance of his place.' And Dáire said, ' Let him be slain too ; go ye now and kill him ! '

" And as they were going forth a death-stroke, quicker than a word, fell on Dáire. And his wife said, ' This death stroke is on account of the Christian. Let some one go quickly and get his blessing for us, and thou wilt be cured ; and let

those who went forth to kill him be forbidden to do so, and be called back.' So two men went forth to the Christian ; and concealing what had happened, they said to him, ' Lo, Dáire is sick ; may something from thee be brought to him, so that he may be healed.' St. Patrick, however, knowing what had happened said, ' Certainly !' And he blessed some water and gave it to them, saying : ' Go, sprinkle your horse with this water, and take him away with you.' And they did so ; and the horse came to life again, and they took him away with them ; and Dáire was healed by the sprinkling of the holy water.

" Then Dáire came to pay his respects to St. Patrick bringing with him a wonderful bronze cauldron that had come from beyond the seas, and held three gallons. And Dáire said, ' Lo ! this bronze vessel is for thee.' And St. Patrick said, '*Grazacham.*' And when Dáire returned to his own house he said, ' That is a stupid man, who said nothing more civil than *Grazacham* in return for a wonderful bronze three-gallon pot.' Then Dáire proceeded to say to his servants, ' Go and bring us back our pot.' So they went and said to Patrick, ' We are going to take away the pot.' But all St. Patrick said this time too was, ' *Grazacham*, take it away.' And they took it away. And Dáire questioned his men, saying, ' What did the Christian say when ye took back the pot ?' And they answered, ' He just said *Grazacham.*' Dáire answered and said, *Grazacham* when it is given ! *Grazacham*, when it is taken away ! His expression is so good that his

pot must be brought back again to him with his *Grazacham*. And Dáire came himself this time, and brought the pot to Patrick, saying : ‘ Thy cauldron must remain with thee ; for thou art a steadfast and unchangeable man ; moreover, as for that portion of land which thou didst desire before, I give it to thee now, as fully as I possess it ; and do thou dwell there.’

“ And that is the city which is now called Ardd-Machae. And they went both of them out, St. Patrick and Dáire, to inspect the admirable and acceptable gift that was being offered ; and they ascended that high ground, and found a hind with her little fawn lying there where now stands the altar of the Northern Church in Ardd-Machae.

“ And St. Patrick’s companions wanted to take the fawn and kill it ; but the saint did not wish this to be done, and would not allow it ; nay, on the contrary, the saint himself took the fawn and carried it on his shoulders. And the hind followed him, like a gentle and tame sheep until he let the fawn loose in another wood situated on the north side of Ardd-Machae, where to this very day, the learned say there are remaining certain signs of his power.”<sup>4</sup>

It is on the site of this wooded brake where St. Patrick—“ true brother of that company ” of gentle saints, which counts St. Francis and St. Ciaran and so many others in its fair fellowship—let loose the little fawn, that stands to-day the Cathedral of Armagh. Dr. Healy, in a

<sup>4</sup> *Muirchu I.*, 24.

beautiful chapter of his *Life of St. Patrick*, has expressed the mystic significance of the exquisite episode :

"Patrick would not allow his followers to hurt the startled doe. Like the Good Shepherd, he carried the fawn on his own shoulders to a place of rest. Patrick, who saw through the mystic veil of the future, saw, too, how that doe with her fawn was a figure of his own church of Armagh, destined to be hunted and persecuted so often in the future—'So often doomed to death, yet fated not to die'—and he, too, must have got a vision of the glory that awaited his church on that northern hill in the far distant ages."

It seems plain from the story in Muirchu that St. Patrick had a small settlement in Armagh before he founded his metropolitan Church there. The narrative suggests that Dáire's wife may have been a Christian, and had been the means of inducing her yet Pagan husband to grant a site for a small Christian settlement. Afterwards Dáire won over by Patrick's saintliness—especially his disinterestedness and "steadfastness," no less than by the miraculous power he saw him wield — became himself a Christian. When, therefore, Patrick on his return from Rome, wanted a place for his "cathedral," it was Dáire who had the honour of donating it.

The *Tripartite* describes the ceremony of marking out the dimensions of the new church on the "Ridge of the Willows" as carried out with much solemnity by Patrick and his clerics, attended by

Dáire and his nobles. "After this Patrick went with his elders and Dáire with his magnates of Orior to the hill to mark it out, to bless it, and to consecrate it." The Latin *Tripartite* (published by Colgan in his *Trias Thaumaturga*) tells us how the dedication of the site took place. "The way in which Patrick measured the rath was this : The angel before him, and Patrick behind the angel with his household, and with Ireland's Elders, and with the Staff of Jesus in his hand ; and he said that great would be the crime of him who should sin therein, even as great should be the reward of him who would do God's Will therein. Then Patrick laid out the *ferta* or cemetery of the church. Seven score feet in its circular enclosure [probably its diameter] with seven and twenty feet in the great house, and seventeen feet in the kitchen, and seven feet in the oratory, and in that way it was he used to found his convents or cloisters always."

Curiously enough it seems to have been in the original small church on the lower site called *Na Ferta*, that St. Patrick kept the precious relics which St. Leo had given him to take back with him from Rome. They included relics of SS. Peter and Paul, of Laurence and Stephen ; a cloth that had been dipped in the Precious Blood, and hair of the Blessed Virgin. The *Tripartite* tells of a letter of the Pope directing that there should be vigils before the relics with lamps and lights in the night always, and Mass and psalm-singing by day, and prayer in the night, and that they should be exposed every year for the

multitudes to venerate them. From the *Book of the Angel* (in the Book of Armagh) we learn that there was a procession each Sunday from the Cathedral on the Hill to the Shrine of the Martyrs in the lower church, and we even find mention of the psalm prescribed to be sung during the progress.

As we ponder over these things, we seem to see the golden link which St. Patrick forged between Ireland and Rome fifteen centuries ago gleam with mystic brightness in the light of those ancient vigil lamps in the old "Sanctuary of the Martyrs"; and we feel that St. Peter has kept "faithful watch and ward" for us on the Heights of Macha through all the war-filled centuries that lie between.

## *Chapter XIII.—The Metropolitan.*



ITH the establishment of his Metropolis at Armagh the work of St. Patrick enters on a fresh phase. The Church he had organised had grown into its full stature ; and now his own activities which, up to this point, were largely those of a missioner "in the field," took on a new character. He was the Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical "Province" of Ireland, and henceforth most of his time must be spent at Armagh from which however he made frequent journeys to visit and "confirm" the communities of his Suffragan Bishops in all parts of Ireland. These journeys, doubtless, brought him into all the territories ; and if we try to follow his footsteps, with the guidance of the *Tripartite*, we find ourselves tracking him through all the "Fifths" of ancient Ireland.

In general, however, it may be said that his own missionary conquests were mostly made in the territories comprised in the modern provinces of Connacht and Ulster. It is here that he achieved, "by the bounty of God" those results which he thankfully chronicles in his *Confession* when he tells how he journeyed "through many perils, even to outlying regions beyond which no man dwelt, and where never

had any one come to baptize, or ordain clergy, or confirm the people," and where he himself "initiated everything carefully and very gladly."

His work in the territories comprised in the modern provinces of Leinster and Munster was of a different character. Here the initial missionary work had been done by other hands. His "journeyings" through them was, for the most part, that of a Metropolitan "on visitation."

For the most part, but not entirely. We have good reason for accepting as authentic the stories which ascribe to his own apostolic labours the conversion of the ruling princes of the two Laighens (modern Leinster), and of the King of Cashel. These conversions consolidated the work of the previous missionaries, and enabled St. Patrick himself to complete the organization of the Irish Church as an organic whole.

The situation in North and South Laighen (the kingdoms then comprised in what is now the province of Leinster) was peculiar. There seems to have been a good many Pre-Patrician Christians both here and in Munster, and it is not without significance that Palladius, sent by Pope Celestine to the "Scots believing in Christ," as their first bishop, landed in this "Fifth," and his fellow-workers continued to labour in it after his death. Now it is very difficult to make out what relations existed between the Palladian missionaries and the Patrician, but one gathers they were not particularly cordial. It is only after he had been clothed with the metro-

politan dignity by Pope Leo that we find St. Patrick visiting the district in which the missionaries left by his predecessor worked. A curious story recorded in the *Tripartite* commemorates the hostility of the ruling chieftain, and the counterbalancing kindness of a poor relation of his who killed his only cow so that the saint should have a good meal. It would indicate that there was no great cordiality for St. Patrick in the district where his predecessor had established his settlements.

It was in Leinster that the two companions of Secundinus, Auxilius and Isserninus, had been at work since their arrival in Ireland, in the circumstances already chronicled. The re-adjustment of their relations with the new Metropolitan, and its good effects for the progress of the Faith in North and South Laighen are among the matters we must now consider. But we must bear in mind their previous relations with our saint to understand why, up to this date, he had not attempted any missionary work in Leinster.

He had good friends, however, in this "Fifth." Muirchu in his account of the events which made memorable St. Patrick's first Easter at Tara relates that as our saint entered the banqueting hall "no one of them all rose up at his approach save one only, and that was Dubhthach-maccu-Lugir, an excellent poet, with whom there was staying at that time a certain young poet named Fiacc, who afterwards became a famous bishop, and whose relics are now venerated at Sleibte" (Sletty).

" This Dubhthach, as I have said, alone of the heathen folk, rose up in honour of St. Patrick ; and the saint blessed him, and he was the first to believe in God that day ; and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

The conversion of Dubhthach, the great poet and lawyer, was an event of tremendous importance, for it represented St. Patrick's first conquest among the native scholars, whose influence was so great over the people. Moreover, Dubhthach was a relative of Crimthann, the King of Southern Laighen (whose royal seat was at Rathvilly), as well as his " Chief Poet." Largely owing (as one may gather from some surviving poems of Dubhthach) to the influence of his Chief Poet, Crimthann embraced Christianity (to which his father, Enda, had been bitterly hostile) and was baptized, together with his wife Mel, and their son, Dathi, by no less a person than St. Patrick. An ancient poem, ascribed to Dubhthach records the memorable event :—

The King [*i.e.* Crimthann] believed in Patrick  
without hard conditions.

He received him as a chaste, a holy soul-friend,  
At Rathvilly.

The blessings which Patrick gave there never  
decay

Upon beautiful Mel, upon Dathi, and upon  
Crimthann.

St. Patrick was now concerned to find a suitable bishop for the Lagenians, and on the

advice of Dubhthach, his choice fell on the Chief Poet's nephew and pupil " Fiacc the Fair," the handsome, courteous youth, who with his uncle, had broken through the odious restrictions of his order, and risen to do reverence to the saint at Tara.

In later days, when Patrick's work was done and " his soul from his body after labours was severed," St. Fiacc (who even as " chief bishop of Leinster " seems to have practised his old bardic trade), wrote (or at least has had ascribed to him) a celebrated elegy on the Apostle, called from its first words : " Genair Patraicc." The *Preface* to this poem in the *Liber Hymnorum*<sup>1</sup> contains a quaint story concerning his own selection and consecration as Bishop :

" Fiacc of Sletty composed this hymn about Patrick. Now this Fiacc was son of Mac Erca, son of Bregan, son of Dáire Barrach—from whom are the Uí Barrche—son of Cathair Mór, and the said Fiacc was further a pupil of Dubhthach Mac Uí Lughair who was chief poet of Ireland. It was this Dubhthach who rose up before Patrick at Tara, after Laoghaire had decreed that none should rise up before him in the house, and he became a friend of Patrick from henceforth, and was afterwards baptized by Patrick. Well, he went on one occasion to Dubhthach's house in Leinster, and Dubhthach gave welcome to Patrick. Said Patrick to Dubhthach, ' Seek out for me a man of rank, of good family and

<sup>1</sup> *Liber Hymn.* I., p. 96. A variant of the story is told in the *Additions* to *Tirechan* in the *Book of Armagh*.

morals, who has *tantum* one wife and one son.' 'Why dost thou seek a man of that stamp?' said Dubhthach. 'For him to enter into orders.' 'Fiacc is the man,' said Dubhthach, 'but he has gone on circuit in Connacht.' While they were thus speaking, Fiacc arrived. Said Dubhthach, 'Here is the person we spoke of.' 'Though he be so,' said Patrick, 'possibly what we have been saying would not be agreeable to him.' 'Let there be made an attempt at tonsuring me,' said Dubhthach, 'so that Fiacc may see it.' So when Fiacc saw it he asked: 'Why is an attempt being made to tonsure Dubhthach? That is wasteful, for there is not in Ireland a poet the like of him.' 'Thou wouldest be taken in place of him,' said Patrick. 'The loss of me to Ireland is less than would be the loss of Dubhthach,' said Fiacc. So Patrick cut off Fiacc's beard then, and there came grace upon him thereafter, so that he read all the ecclesiastical order in one night (or in a fortnight as others relate), and there was conferred upon him bishop's grade, so that it is he who was the chief bishop of Leinster from thenceforth, and his coarb after him."

There had been, as a matter of fact, a bishop in Leinster before Fiacc, for Isserninus—who accompanied Secundinus and Auxilius to Ireland from Gaul in 439 in the circumstances with which we are already familiar—had first tried to establish himself in their territory. He may have been a native of it, as Dr. Bury supposes. His position seems to have been difficult—possibly owing to the influence with the king, of

Dubhthach, who as a friend of St. Patrick would naturally resent the arrival of Secundinus, Auxilius and Isserninus, if they came to supplant the saint. At all events we find Isserninus, or, to call him by his Irish name, Bishop Fith, making several unsuccessful attempts to establish him in this region, from which he was finally expelled, with a tribe of his converts described as the "seven sons of Cathbu."

Shortly after this, the return of St. Patrick from Rome, as Metropolitan, cleared up the situation. The saint himself had the happiness of converting to the true Faith the two princes of North Leinster, Ailill and Illan, who had succeeded in the sovereignty of this territory the obstinate old Pagan, their father, Dunlang. At Naas, their royal seat, the Apostle baptized the Princes, and received the vows of the two daughters of the former Mogain and Fedelm, who aspired to the life of consecrated virgins. The conjunction of the two events, the baptism of their father and uncle with the religious profession of the princesses, seems to indicate that it was through the ladies of the royal household that Christianity first made its entrance into the ruling family of North Leinster (for the maidens must have been baptized before this). Doubtless the influence of the women of Ireland was often to be credited with such desirable results.

Now that the Princes of North Leinster were Christians, St. Patrick was able to secure

within their protection a district where poor Isserninus (who, as we have seen, had been driven from "post to pillar" in South Leinster) might be at last at rest. He settled him at Cill Cuillen (Kilcullen) near the Fort of Ailinn. At the same time he arranged that Auxilius, the other companion of Secundinus, should have his place at a place which still bears (though in a form hardly recognisable) his name, Cill Ausaille (Ecclesia Auxiliii), corrupted into Killosy, and now Killashee.

Auxilius seems to have remained in Cill Ausaille until his death in 459. But Isserninus was to have further wanderings before he should find "the place of his resurrection."

This was to be in South Leinster—which, as we have already said, may have been his natal territory. After the conversion of King Crimthann at Rathvilly St Patrick seems to have interceded with that prince to admit once more Isserninus and his converts the "sons of Cathbu" to his dominions. In the *Additions* to Tirechán in the *Book of Armagh*, we read of the lands donated to the sons of Cathbu, and how Isserninus (henceforth known again by his Irish name of Bishop Fith) paid homage to Patrick for his "andoit" and his "manche" and set up with his converts at the place called after him Ath Fithot (mod. Aghade). Here he died in 468.

The names of Auxilius and Isserninus are associated with that of Patrick in important legislation for the Irish Church. We have already seen that before the death of Secundinus (447),

that prelate with Saint Patrick, Benignus and Auxilius had met together at Armagh, and issued an epoch-making *Canon* affirming the primacy of Armagh over the other Irish Sees, and its own immediate dependence on the Apostolic See of Rome. In a later "Synod," which was held after the conversion of the Princes of North and South Leinster made possible the satisfactory organization of the Church in that "Fifth," other decrees were issued which more immediately dealt with the discipline of the clergy and religious, the jurisdiction of the bishops, the "inviolability" of the dioceses, the regulations governing collections for charitable purposes, marriage laws, the relations between the Christians and their Pagan neighbours, penitential legislation, etc.<sup>2</sup>

It is significant to find that the organization of the Church in Leinster, on which the issue of the Canons of this Synod seems to set the seal, can be shown to coincide with that renewal of the war between the High Kings of Tara and the Lagenians which was to lead to the death of King Laoghaire in 462. The *Annals* record under 452 "a great slaughter of the Leinstermen" at the hands of the High King. The Lagenians under King Crimthann had their revenge six years later (458) when at the Battle of Ath-dara they took Laoghaire prisoner, and only let him go when he swore "by the Sun and Wind that he would remit the cow-tribute." He broke his

<sup>2</sup> The Patrician Canons have been reproduced by Archbishop Healy in his *Life and Writings of St. Patrick* (pp. 708-716) from Haddan and Stubbs *Councils* (II. 328-30).

word and the *Annals*, recording his death, suggest "maybe it was his guarantees to the Leinster men, the Sun and Wind, that killed him"! He died as he had lived, an obstinate Pagan and was buried on the heights of Tara standing upright in full armour facing his hereditary enemy, the Pagan King of Leinster, as he looked northwards from his sepulchral chamber on Mullaghmast. It strikes one as curious to find the Leinster princes adopting Christianity at a time when their hereditary war with the descendant of Niall was at its hottest. The circumstance affords one more proof I think that St. Patrick was not *persona grata* to Laoghaire, and recognition of that fact among the other Irish princes.

The conversion of Crimthann, King of South Leinster, probably facilitated St. Patrick's plans for the consolidation of the Church in Munster. Crimthann's daughter, the Princess Ethna, was married to the King of Cashel, Aengus, son of Natfraich—she may have been a Christian herself, for, as we have seen, the ladies of the royal houses of Eire showed themselves, as a general rule, more accessible to conversion than the men. At all events when her father, King Crimthann, had adopted the true faith, and been baptized by St. Patrick, it is easy to guess how our saint was brought into immediate contact with the King of Munster. The striking events which accompanied the conversion of King Aengus are recorded in the *Tripartite*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Tript.* I., p. 195.

After this Patrick went into Munster to Cashel of the Kings. When Aengus, son of Natfraich, arose in the morning, all the idols were on their faces. And Patrick, with his household, found him beside the fort. He gave them welcome, and brings them into the fort to the place where Patrick's altar-stone is to-day. And after this Patrick baptized Natfraich's son, and the men of Munster, and left blessing and prosperity upon them, and he blessed the fort—namely Cashel.

"While Patrick was baptizing Oengus the spike of the crozier went through Oengus's foot. Said Patrick 'Why didst thou not tell this to me?' 'It seemed to me,' quoth Oengus, 'that it was part of the ritual.' 'Thou shalt have thy reward,' said Patrick, 'thy successor shall not die of a wound for ever.'"

The *Tripartite* follows lovingly Patrick through nearly every part of Munster,<sup>4</sup> and the author expresses beautifully the consecration thus received by the favoured "Fifth" by saying that "he celebrated Mass on every seventh ridge."

But the time came all too quickly when he must bid the Munstermen farewell. The *Tripartite* tells a beautiful story of the leave-taking. From all sides "the men of Munster went after him," trying to outstrip each other. They came up with him at last at Brosnacha and "the men, women and children of Munster uttered a great

<sup>4</sup> Except the districts covered by the modern counties of Kerry and Clare—which he is represented as leaving to the Apostolate of SS. Brendan and Senan.

cry and a great joyful clamour (*broscur*) for gladness at looking upon Patrick ; and from that the Brosnacha were named. Then Patrick bade farewell to the men of Munster, and bestowed blessings upon them, saying :—

Blessing on the people of Munster  
Men, women and children.  
Blessing on the land  
That gives them fruit.

Blessing on every treasure  
That shall be produced on their plains,  
Without any one (being) in want of help,  
God's blessing on Munster.

Blessing on their mountain peaks,  
On their bare flagstones,  
Blessing on their glens,  
Blessing on their ridges.

Like sands of sea under ships,  
Be the number of their hearths :  
On slopes, on plains,  
On mountains, on peaks."

## *Chapter XIV.—Last Days at Saul—The Writings of St. Patrick.*



T was not alone to the people of Munster that we must see St. Patrick bidding farewell in those moving Gaelic verses, which the *Tripartite* has preserved for us, but to his own career as an active missionary and prelate. There is reason to believe that some four years before his death, feeling the weariness and infirmities of old age come upon him, our Apostle laid aside the heavy burden of his charge over the Irish Church, and retired to "make his soul" in the beloved "Barn" which Dichu had given him long ago for his first church on Irish soil.

They say that Dichu, his first conquest for Christ, joined him in the monastery which had arisen around the Sabhall, and side by side the two old men, the old saint and the old warrior, prepared to "go the way of their fathers."

Around those last years in Sabhall many legends have clustered, and these have been gathered up by Muirchu, and help us to realise in what manner St. Patrick walked the roads of Mag Inis "radiant with the clear light of faith, and resplendent with a certain wonderful diadem of heavenly glory," or took his Sabbath

*A Folio  
From the Book of Armagh.*

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نَبِيٌّ لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ  
وَالْمُنْكَرِينَ مُنْذَهٌ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ  
أَنَّمَا يَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
أَنَّمَا يَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ

nissi idula et inniuncta usque Semper colu  
erunt quomodo nuper factae est plebs domini et filii  
dei nuncupantur filii sanctorum et filii re  
gulorum monachi et virgines Christi esse uidentur

**ECC** **C**estem deum inuoco inanimam meam quia non mea  
tior Neque ut sit occasio uobis' neque ut ho  
norem spero ab aliquo uestro Sufficit enim ho  
nor qui non mentitur sed video iam in præsenti sæ  
culo me Supra modum exaltatus sum a domino  
Et non eram dignus neque talis uthoc mihi pre  
staret dum scio melius conuenit Paupertas  
et Calamitas quam diuitiae et diliciae sed et.  
xpi stuc dominus pauper fuit pronobis' ego uero miser  
et infelix Et Si opes uoluero iam non habeo  
neque me ipsum iudico quia quotidie Spero aut  
internicionem Aut Circumueniri Aut  
redigi inseruitutem Siue occasio cuius li  
bet Sed precor Credentibus et timentibus deum  
Qui Cumque dignatus fuerit inspicere  
uel recipere hanc scripturam quam patru  
cius Peccator indoctus scilicet hiberione  
conscriptis ut nemo umquam dicat quod  
mea ignorantia Si aliquid Pussillum Egi  
uel demons trauerim Secundum Sed arbitrami  
ni et uerissime Credatur quod donum dei suis  
set Et haec est Confessio mea antequam  
moriar

**H**uc usque uolumen Quod patricius  
manu Conscriptis Sua : septima deci  
ma Martii die trans latus est pat  
ricius ad celos

---

END OF CONFESSIO S. PATRICII.  
(From Book of Armagh)

rest in the salty air by the shores he loved so well, or cared for the grazing and refreshment of the oxen who had drawn his chariot. One of these legends connects with his apostolate the foundation of the Church in the Isle of Man.

But the picture that rises most readily before us, as we think of these days, is that of St. Patrick writing his *Confession*—

“ And this is my confession before I die ! ” How moving the words are in their stark simplicity, and how close they seem to bring us to the old Saint, whose labours done, “ wishes his brethren and kinsfolk to know what manner of man he was that they might be able to understand the desire of his soul ”—*votum animae meae*.

It is not the great *Thaumaturgus*, looking back on a road made smooth and straight by miracles, but just a tired old missioner, worn out with age, and great labours, and great sorrows and disappointments, this Patrick who sits him down in the quiet hour before the fall of night, to defend his mission, “ to leave to his brethren and spiritual children, a legacy, to strengthen and confirm their faith,” and, incidentally, to tell, in part, the story of his life and his vocation. We feel we can come very close to this Saint, who has known so much of life’s troubles, whose successes have been achieved at the cost of so much toil, and heart-break, and sacrifice, and who has had to endure the sharpest pain known to the human spirit—to be betrayed by his trusted friend, and

misunderstood and unjustly charged by his superiors. Beautiful and majestic is the St. Patrick, beloved by poets and artists, overcoming the Druids, before the assembled hosts of Eire, on the royal hill of Tara ; but this human Patrick of the *Confession*—so simple, so direct, so conscious of his own failings and limitations—and at the same time so conscious of the “great things” wrought by the Spirit through his instrumentality—this is a Patrick dear to us even as our own fathers.

There is no more affecting document in any literature than the *Confession of St. Patrick*; and the halting language in which it is written, the absence of all conscious art, or literary craftsmanship in its composition, the “rusticity”—to use the writer’s own expression—of its phrasing, add immeasurably to, rather than detract from its appeal. We seem to see the old man screwing up his courage, so to speak, to write it at all. He knows to what criticism his want of scholarship is going to expose him—especially on the part of those learned brethren, who have so often objected to an “unlettered” man like him, being left in charge of the Mission to a highly cultured race like the Irish. ‘Behind my back they were saying, ‘Why does this fellow thrust himself into danger amongst hostile people who know not God.’ They did not say this out of malice, but it did not seem meet in their eyes on account of my illiteracy, as I myself witness that I have understood.” This want of education, which is the most serious of

his opponents' charges against his fitness for the Irish Mission, is he not going to deliver the very proof of it in the document that presents his defence? He knows it: "For this reason I have long since thought of writing, but I hesitated until now; for I feared lest I should fall under the censure of men's tongues, and because I have not studied as have others, who in the most approved fashion have drunk in both law and the Holy Scriptures alike, and have never changed their speech from their infancy, but rather have been always rendering it more perfect. For my speech and language is translated into a tongue not my own, as can be easily proved from the savour of my writing, in what fashion I have been taught and am learned in speech." "When a youth, nay, almost a boy, I went into captivity in language [as well as in person]. And so to-day I blush and am exceedingly afraid to lay bare my lack of education."

Not unskilful pleading this, for all it lacks of the advocate's gift of "form." How clearly there emerges from it a cardinal point of his defence—viz., that if his Latin was "rustic," and rusty, he had gained in exchange for it something more immediately useful to him for the purpose of his mission, a good knowledge of Irish.

He himself seems conscious that, even from a human point of view, better than long years of college has been the training he has got for his Mission through the hard things that befell him

in his youth. Scene after scene rises up before him out of the past, and he sees how God was following a plan with him all the time, moulding and shaping him for the work He had designed for him. He sees himself again a merry, thoughtless boy in his father's comfortable home. Idle and careless he remembers himself, not very fond of school—how ruefully he reminds himself of lost opportunities!—fonder of passing his days, no doubt, with the “men servants and maid servants” of his father's *villula*, than in the township school where doubtless Calpurnius would have liked to see this high-spirited lad of his prepare himself by serious study to follow his own decorous footsteps in a prosperous official career! Perhaps if he *had* been at school that day—Patrick, the decurion, would have followed his father and grandfather in the smooth paths of a smug small-townish officialdom. But it was another school that God had chosen for the training of the Patrick whom He had designed “to lead virgin Eire to Christ.”

The *Confession* leads us into that school, and shows the Master fashioning his pupil in it. Exquisite the passage in which the Saint tells us of his initiation into the Science of the Saints, into the secrets of that mystic prayer which was to be his in a pre-eminent manner. Amid the solitude of the wintry hills, where, a poor slave boy, he tended for six long years the flocks of a harsh master—Christ came to him as Friend comes to friend. Forgotten were cold, and hunger, and loneliness, and grief for the loss of

home and kindred, in the warm glow of the Presence of which he had suddenly become conscious on the desolate slopes of Slemish.

From that moment the boy has felt himself directed in all his actions by the Spirit—and now when the divine plan for him has worked itself out to its completion, the old man realises how each incident of his life has been fitted into the accomplishment of it. Wherefore then, he “cannot keep silence—nor would it be fitting—concerning such great benefits and such great grace as the Lord has vouchsafed to bestow on him in the land of his captivity ; because this is what we can render unto Him—namely, that after we have been chastened, and have come to the knowledge of God we shall exalt and praise His wondrous works before every nation which is under the whole heaven.”

It is interesting to observe that while the *Confession* (the composition of which is generally assigned to the last years of the Saint’s life, when his beloved Dálta, St. Benen, had succeeded him in the primacy at Armagh, and he himself was “making his soul” in Sabhall) begins, “I, Patrick the sinner, am the most rustic and the least of all the faithful, and contemptible in the eyes of very many,” the other work (in Latin) ascribed to him, the *Epistle against Coroticus* begins “I, Patrick the sinner, unlearned as everybody knows—I confess that I have been appointed a bishop in Ireland.” It seems to me that the omission of the description of himself as a bishop in the *Confession* and its

inclusion in the *Epistle* is an additional reason for believing that the former was composed after his retirement from the active duties of his ministry, and the second, while he was yet engaged in his apostolic *tournées*.

The *Epistola*, itself, confirms the latter inference. The occasion of its writing is plainly set down in it. On the day following one of those great public Baptisms—which one of his own “Canons” fixes for Easter, Pentecost and the Epiphany—while the newly made Christians had still their white baptismal robes in all their snowy freshness on them, and the chrism still fragrant and shining on their foreheads, the soldiers, and Pictish and Scottish mercenaries, of the British *Gudelic*, Coroticus, had fallen on the defenceless band, slaughtered many of them, and carried off numbers of youths and maidens to the slave markets. As St. Patrick had knowledge of the outrage without delay, we must assume that he was near at hand when it took place, and the available evidence seems to date the occasion as falling in the missionary journeys of the Saint in Leinster or Munster, which mark the last phase of his career as missionary “in the field.”

In an earlier chapter of this work reasons have been given for accepting the identification of the fierce unscrupulous Coroticus of this episode with the Caredig who gave his name to Cardiganshire—and whose descendants, more than a century later, set up their royal seat at Ail-Cluade. If this be so, it gives us additional reasons for placing the scene of the outrage on

the south-eastern parts of Ireland, which the fleet of Coroticus could reach easily.

Apart from his grief for his children, which the Saint expresses in most moving terms, Patrick was struck to the heart by the outrage because it had been committed by his own British countrymen, and, as one gathers, by command of a ruler with whom he had, by birth, a close personal tie. Thinking at first he had nothing to do but put the plea of a "common citizenship" before the chief of the raiders, St. Patrick sent a deputation of clergy headed by "a holy presbyter whom he had taught from infancy,"<sup>1</sup> asking for the release of the baptized captives, and the restoration of some of the booty. His appeal was received with scorn and contempt: "They jeered at them."

Thereupon our Saint took a bolder step. He wrote the *Epistola*, which we are discussing and sent it, apparently, to be read in the churches of his own native district, in the presence of all the people, yea in the presence of Coroticus himself. He asks the priests to excommunicate Coroticus, or at least to "boycott" him and his tools until they should have repented, and set free their captives: "whence, therefore, ye holy men and humble of heart I beseech you earnestly, it is not right to pay court to such men, nor to take food or drink with them, nor ought one to accept their alms-givings, until by doing sore penance

<sup>1</sup> This would fix the date of the event late in St. Patrick's ministry—since an infant pupil of his had time to grow into a venerable priest.

with shedding of tears they make amends before God, and liberate the servants of God and the baptized handmaidens of Christ, for whom He died and was crucified."

In his appeal to his brethren in Britain not to have any friendly intercourse with Coroticus until the transgressor had made satisfaction for the outrage, he strikes again and again the note of a common nationality. He reminds them of his own origin, " freeborn according to the flesh," " born of a father who was a decurion," and of the noble rank he had " sold " to become " a slave in Christ to a foreign nation." The thought is bitter to him that it is " his own " who have done this grievous thing to him, and to " the flock of the Lord, which verily in Ireland was growing up excellently with the greatest care." How *can* his priestly brethren have part with such men as Coroticus : " which of the saints would not shudder to jest or feast with such men ? They have filled their houses with the spoil of dead Christians. They live by plunder. Wretched men, they know not that it is poison, they offer their deadly food to their friends and sons."

In the hope that Coroticus (who, it would appear, in spite of his scoundrelly conduct, was still at least a " professing " Christian, and went to church) may be present when the letter is read, there is a special message to himself, reminding him how different the conduct of real Christians : " the custom of the Roman Christian Gauls is this : they send holy and fit men to the Franks

and other heathen with many thousands of *solidi* to redeem baptized captives. Thou slayest as many, and sellest them to a foreign nation that knows not God. Thou deliverest the members of Christ as it were into a house of ill-fame. What manner of hope in God hast thou, or whoso consents with thee, or who holds converse with thee in words of flattery?"

Then his grief overcomes him for the sheep of the Lord, for Whom he was shepherd, torn to pieces and spoiled by the ravening wolves—and the Epistle ends in a long wail of sorrow and love, which makes us realise, almost better than aught else, how much St. Patrick loved his Irish children :

"Therefore, in sadness and in grief shall I cry aloud. O most lovely and beloved brethren, and sons whom I begot in Christ (I cannot reckon them), what shall I do for you? I am not worthy to come to the aid of either God or man. The wickedness of the wicked has prevailed against us. We are become, as it were, strangers. Perchance they do not believe that we received one baptism, or that we have one God and Father. It is in their eyes a shameful thing to have been born in Ireland. Therefore, I grieve for you, I grieve, O ye most dear to me. But again, I rejoice within myself. I have not laboured for nought, and my journey into a strange land was not in vain. And yet there happened a crime so horrid and unspeakable! Thank God it was as baptized believers that ye departed from this world to paradise. I can see

you. Ye have begun to remove to where there shall be no night nor sorrow nor death any more, but ye shall leap like calves loosened from their bonds, and ye shall tread down the wicked, and they shall be ashes under your feet."

The letter concludes with an appeal for the diffusion of its contents among the Christian communities to which its protest was addressed :

" I beseech earnestly that whatever servant of God be ready that he be the bearer of this letter, so that on no account it be suppressed by anyone, but much rather be read in the presence of all the people, yea in the presence of Coroticus himself, if so be that God may inspire them to amend their lives to God some time, so that even though late they may repent of their impious doings (murderer as he is in regard of the brethren of the Lord !) and may liberate the baptized women captives, whom they had taken, so that they may deserve to live to God, and be made whole, here and in eternity.

" Peace to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Whether Coroticus was moved to repentance and restitution by this powerful appeal we have no means of knowing. But a legend, preserved by Muirchu, of the punishment that befell him would seem to indicate that the traditional belief was that he had persisted in his iniquity. Wherefore a strange and terrible punishment befell him :

" Patrick," says Muirchu, " by a letter endeavoured to recall him to the way of truth ; but he mocked at his salutary warnings. When,

however, this was reported to Patrick, he prayed to the Lord and said : ‘ O God, if it be possible, banish this faithless man both from this world and the world to come.’

“ No long time elapsed when he [Coroticus] caused a magical spell to be chanted before him, from which he heard that in a short time he would pass away from the royal throne. And all the men dearest to him broke out into language of the same purport. He, then, when he was in the midst of his court took on the form of a little fox—a pitiable object—and departed in the presence of his friends ; and from that day and that hour, like flowing water that passeth away, he was never seen again.”

In his *Confession* St. Patrick apologises for the incorrectness of his Latin by pleading that his “speech and language had been translated into a tongue not his own” ; and one of the most astonishing things about him is the knowledge of Irish he acquired, and the way the musical Gaelic rushed from his lips in the most solemn moments of his ministry. An immortal picture has been preserved of him, as he passed through the hidden dangers of his road to Tara on his first Easter in Ireland chanting the words of his *Lorica* or Breastplate :

I bind to myself to-day :

vast might, invocation of the Trinity ;  
belief in a Threeness ;  
Confession of Oneness ;  
towards the Creator.

I bind to myself to-day :

the might of Christ's Birth and His Baptism ;  
the might of His Crucifixion and Burial ;  
the might of His Resurrection and Ascension ;  
the might of His Descent to the Judgment of Doom.

I bind to myself to-day

the might of the order of Cherubim ;  
obedience of Angels ;  
ministration of Archangels ;  
hope of resurrection for the sake of reward ;  
prayers of Patriarchs ;  
predictions of Prophets ;  
preachings of Apostles ;  
faith of Confessors ;  
innocence of holy Virgins ;  
deeds of righteous men.

I bind to myself to-day

the might of Heaven ;  
brightness of Sun ;  
whiteness of Snow ;  
splendour of Fire ;  
speed of Lightning ;  
swiftness of Wind ;  
depth of Sea ;  
stability of Earth ;  
firmness of Rock.

I bind to myself to-day  
the might of God  
                for my piloting ;  
Power of God  
                for my upholding ;  
Wisdom of God  
                for my guidance ;  
Eye of God  
                for my foresight ;  
Ear of God  
                for my hearing ;  
Word of God  
                for my utterance ;  
Hand of God  
                for my guardianship ;  
Path of God  
                to lie before me ;  
Shield of God  
                for my protection ;  
Host of God  
                for my salvation ;  
against snares of demons ;  
against allurements of vices ;  
against solicitations of nature ;  
against every person who wishes me ill  
                far and near,  
                alone or in a crowd.

I invoke, therefore, all these forces :  
against every fierce merciless force that may  
                come upon my body and my soul ;  
against incantations of false prophets ;  
against black laws of paganism ;

against false laws of heresy ;  
against encompassment of idolatry ;  
against spells of women and smiths and  
druids ;  
against all knowledge that is forbidden the  
human soul ;

Christ for my guardianship to-day :

against poison, against burning,  
against drowning, against wounding,  
that there may come to me a multitude of  
rewards ;

Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ in me,  
Christ under me, Christ over me,  
Christ to right of me, Christ to left of me,  
Christ in lying down, Christ in sitting, Christ  
in rising up,

Christ in the heart of every person who may  
think of me !

Christ in the mouth of every one who may  
speak to me !

Christ in every eye, which may look on me !

Christ in every ear, which may hear me !

I bind to myself to-day :

vast might, invocation of the Trinity ;  
belief in a Threeness ;  
confession of Oneness ;  
meeting in the Creator ;  
Domini est salus, Domini est salus, Christi  
est salus ;  
Salus tua, Domine, sit semper vobiscum.

## *Chapter XV.—“ White Places at Morning Tide.”*



EAR as Sabhall was to Patrick, dearer still, one believes, was Armagh :

“ It is Armagh that I love  
A dear thorpe, a dear hill,  
A fortress which my soul haunts-  
eth.”

and as the day of his death drew nigh the old Saint was filled with a great longing to return to his metropolitan seat, and there in the soil made sacred by the relics of the Apostles and Martyrs he had brought with him from Rome almost a score of years earlier, to await the Resurrection :

“ I have chosen a place of resurrection,  
Armagh my church.”

But he who had given his own will into the custody of Christ found that the bond still held :

“ I have no power over my freedom ;  
It is bondage to the end ” ;

and that not Armagh, but Mag Inis, was to give him a grave.

Muirchu, to whom we owe all the information we possess about the last days of our Apostle on earth tells us that having learned from one of his

angel visitants that his death hour was at hand he sent to Ardd-Machae, which he loved beyond all other places," and desired that " many men should come to him to bring him whither he wanted to go."

We can imagine that sad procession starting from the Saul—sadder than a funeral procession—with a dying old man, and not yet the victorious dead, as chief figure in it—and the wailing of the people of the Island Plain as they saw their beloved father and friend borne away from them for ever.

But the parting was not yet to be, and the blessing which Patrick himself had spoken long ago, on Dichu and his people, was to come now to its fruition. The old Saint had not gone far on his road to Armagh, "the land much desired," when a strange spectacle halted his bearers : "by the wayside a certain bush burned with fire and was not consumed, as formerly happened to Moses." Now Victor was Patrick's special angel ; but it may be that he was hurt that his *protégé* had not consulted him about the step the latter had taken, for he sent now, Muirchu tells us,<sup>1</sup> " another angel to forbid Patrick to go whither he desired to go. And he said to him : Wherefore dost thou set out without the advice of Victor ? Therefore Victor calleth thee, and do thou turn aside to him."

Patrick, obedient as ever, ordered his bearers to turn aside, and " asked what he ought to do.

<sup>1</sup> Muirchu's account of St. Patrick's death and burial is contained in the final chapters of the Second Book.

And the angel answered and said : Return unto the place whence thou camest, that is, to Sabhall, and the four petitions which thou didst desire are granted to thee."

What these four petitions were Muirchu then sets out :—

" The first petition : that thy jurisdiction be in Ardd-Machae.

The second petition : that whoever, on the day of his death, shall sing the hymn composed concerning thee, thou shalt be the judge of his repentance of his sins.

The third petition : that the descendants of Diclu, who received thee kindly, shall receive mercy, and not perish.

The fourth petition : that all the Irish shall be judged by thee in the Day of Judgment, as it was said to the Apostles : ' And ye shall sit and judge the twelve tribes of Israel,' that thou mayest be the judge of those to whom thou wast an Apostle."

So Patrick had himself borne back to Saul, and from the hands of Bishop Tassach of Raholp " he received the Blessed Eucharist as the *viaticum* of a blessed life, as Victor the angel had told him."

And now the old missioner may close his weary eyes in rest, for his work is done. But we, the people whom he loved, as we press around the couch whereon he lies, making his last thanks-

giving, do we not seem to hear murmured by the dying lips of St. Patrick the words of his *Confession*?

" Behold now I commend my soul to my most faithful God, whose ambassador I am, in my lowliness, only because He accepteth no person and He chose me for this office that I should be his minister, but amongst the least.

" And now what shall I render to the Lord for all the things He hath rendered to me? Nay, what shall I say, or what shall I promise to my Lord, for I am worth nothing except what He Himself has given to me; but He searcheth the hearts and the reins, and [knoweth] that enough, and more than enough, do I desire, and was ready, that He should grant me to drink of His Cup, as He granted to others also who love Him.

" On which account let it not happen to me from my God that I should ever part with his people which He purchased in the ends of the earth."

So " testifying in truth and in exultation of heart " that all the wondrous fruits of his mission had been the free gift of God—*donum Dei*—and with a last prayer on his lips for his beloved Irish people, St. Patrick went forth from the darkness of exile to " the clear shining of the sun, the glory of Christ Jesus our Redeemer."

They say that as the gates of heaven swung on their hinges to let his soul through, great companies of angels swept earthward, and the light that never was on land or sea lay on the

Island Plain, where he had said his first Mass on Irish soil, and received from Bishop Tassach, for the last time, the Bread of Angels : " for in the day of his death," says Muirchu, " there was no night and in the province in which his funeral was conducted, for twelve days ' night did not come down and wrap the earth with dusky wings,' and ' the gloom of night was not so great, and Hesperus did not bring in the shadows that shew stars.' And the people of Ulaid said that to the very end of the year in which he died the nights were never so dark as formerly they had been."

On the first night of his obsequies those who kept vigil round his holy body felt their eyes touched with a strange heaviness, and fell into a strange slumber. But it was not heavy enough to prevent them hearing the angelic cantors who " kept watch " in their place, " in the customary manner of vigils and psalms," and who, before they winged their way again to heaven, left in the little church of Saul " a most sweet odour as of honey and a delicious fragrance as of wine."

It had been foreseen by the angel who came to prepare St. Patrick for death that there should be a " sore contention amounting even to war between the Uí-Neill and the men of Airthir (Orior) on one side, and the people of Ulaid on the other for the possession of his body." Accordingly, we are told by Muirchu that certain directions had been given by the angel for St. Patrick's funeral : " Let two unbroken oxen be chosen, and let them go whithersoever they will,

and in whatever place they lie down, let a church be built in honour of thy poor body.

" And as the angel said, unbroken oxen were chosen, and they drew a wagon, with a litter firmly fixed on it in which the holy body was, yoked to their shoulders. And oxen from the herds of Conail from the place that is called Clocher, on the east of Findubair, were made glorious by being chosen for this purpose. And they went forth, the Will of God guiding them, to Dun-Lethglaisse, where Patrick was buried."

The contention predicted between the peoples for the possession of St. Patrick's relics did, we are told, actually take place : " The contest, fed by their anger took place," according to Muirchu, " by the channel which is called the Hill of the Ox."

But God was not minded to allow the obsequies of his servant to be desecrated by that unseemly contest : " By the merit of Patrick and by the mercy of God, to prevent the shedding of blood, the sea swelled up with high and curling billows ; and the tops of the waves split the vault of heaven ; and the ridges quivering on the billows rushed to battle, sometimes with quavering laughter, and sometimes with tawny valleys, as if to restrain the enmity of terrible nations. The wildness of the lough arose, and forbade the people to fight."

But only for a time ; when the storm passed the men of Airthir and the Uí-Néill returned again to the charge and only " a fortunate delusion " averted bloodshed. A wagon and oxen which

they thought were the bearers of the holy body were seized by them—after the body had been safely buried at Down—and it was only when they reached the river, Cabcenne, that they discovered their mistake.

Though Muirchu expressly states that St. Patrick was buried in Down, there is a tradition, preserved in the *Book of Armagh* that his grave was in Saul : “Columcille,” says a note (ascribed by Dr. White to Ferdомнach, the scribe of the *Book of Armagh*) “under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, showed the place of Patrick’s burial, he confirms [the tradition as to] where it is ; that is, in Sabul Patrick, that is, in the church nearest the sea, where there is a gathering of relics, that is, of the bones of Colum-cille from Britain, and a gathering together of all the saints of Ireland in the Day of Judgment.”

It is plain that not long after St. Patrick’s death the exact location of his burial place became a matter of uncertainty. This is referred to in another note in the *Book of Armagh*, where among the “four points” of Patrick’s resemblance with Moses it is affirmed “where his bones are no man knoweth.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A further discussion of the burial place of St. Patrick will be found in the *Appendix*.

## *Chapter XVI.—St. Patrick and the Women of Ireland.*



N a very interesting article contributed by Father Felim O'Brien, O.F.M., to the *Irish Rosary*,<sup>1</sup> we find reference to the thesis defended by M. Van der Essen, Professor of Mediaeval History in the University of Louvain, viz., "that St. Patrick inaugurated the mission methods which prevailed all through the Middle Ages until the Franciscans adopted, in the thirteenth century, a new system in their Oriental missions." I propose, in the final chapter of this book, to make some study of the "mission methods" of our Apostle—and show how he anticipated the best system evolved by the most up-to-date "missiologists," and how marvellously "modern" he was in his solution of outstanding missionary problems. But it seems to me that a special chapter ought to be given to the way he tackled the question of the evangelisation of the women of Ireland, and the important rôle he assigned to women as active workers in the missionary field.

A modern historian of the seventeenth century Missions of the French Jesuits in Canada has

<sup>1</sup> June, 1930. "The First 'Aucam' Congress at Louvain."

claimed as a triumph of missionary foresight and organization the employment of women, and especially of nuns, in the Canadian Missions. He does not seem to be aware that when Father Le Jeune, S.J., sent forth his famous "clarion call" (to which, amongst others, Mère Marie de l' Incarnation Martin, the great Ursuline foundress, and her friend, Madame de la Peltre, responded so heroically) and invited the cloisters of France to send forth nursing sisters and teachers to establish hospitals and schools for Indian girls, and undertake missionary work among the Indian women, he was merely following in a path that had been blazed by St. Patrick exactly twelve centuries earlier.

The employment of Women in the Missions was in Patrician Ireland, as in seventeenth century Canada, or modern China, Africa and India, an absolute necessity. "A nation," we are told, "is what its women make its men"; and if St. Patrick wanted to make Ireland a Christian nation, there had to be ample provision for the instruction in Catholic doctrine of its women-kind. And this could only be carried out by women.

So from the early days of the Patrician mission we find the names of holy women, who left home and kindred and native land to work for Christ in the mission field in Ireland. The numerous "sisters" often attributed to St. Patrick were (as Lanigan, with characteristic perspicacity, long ago suggested) probably some of these holy women. Their names are familiar to most of us,

and indicate varying nationalities. Thus the names Tigris and Lupita suggest that their bearers were of Gallic origin. Tigris,, it is curious to note, was the name of a monk in the monastery of Lérins—and one gathers it could be used of either men or women. Lupita, with its Irish form of Lupait, seems to be the feminine of Luples. Darerca, who is mentioned as a third "sister" of the Apostle, was, if her name is a correct indication, an Irishwoman—Liemain seems also Irish. Ricenda sounds "Teutonic"—and it is curious to find from Tirechán that St. Patrick had "Teutons" on his missionary staff; for so I interpret the word "barbarus" applied to Methbrain, the relative of our Saint left by him at Magh Slecht, and Conleng and Ercleng his monks whom he stationed at Kilmore, Moyglass.

Some of these foreign ladies were, doubtless, the mothers and sisters of the missionaries. Thus we hear of Nitria, a sister of the Gallic missionaries who founded Baslic, and Cipia, the sister-in-law of Assicus, and mother of Bite, the founders of the church at Elphin.

Others of them may have been Christian women from Britain or Gaul, carried off to Ireland as slaves, in one of the all too frequent raids of that cruel age. The story of Lupait and Tigris, said to have been sold as slaves in Conaille Muirthemne, suggest this. We know, too, from the *Confession* how heroic a stand these Christian girls, sold into slavery, made against their masters, and how St. Patrick reverenced and pitied them :

" But the women who are kept in slavery suffer especially ; they constantly endure even unto terror and threats. But the Lord gave grace to many of His handmaidens, for though they are forbidden, they earnestly follow the example set them." He probably was instrumental in having some of them ransomed, and then employed them in the Mission, for in his *Epistle against Coroticus* he commends as a very holy work (and therefore one he himself was likely to practise) the " custom of the Roman Gauls " of sending " holy and fit men to the Franks and other heathen with many thousands of *solidi* to redeem baptized captives."

Other high born ladies from Christian lands came as volunteers to the Mission. Thus we read in the *Tripartite* of the arrival at Armagh of " nine daughters of the King of the Lombards, and a daughter of the King of Britain : " They tarried to the east of Armagh, in the place where *Coll na nIngen* (the maidens' hazel wood) stands to-day. They sent messengers to Patrick asking his permission to approach him." Patrick announced the approaching death of three of them, and directed they should be buried in *Coll na nIngen*. Of the rest, six were directed by him to set up their convent in Druim Fendeda, and one of them was to establish herself as a solitary, with a dog to keep guard for her at Cengoba. Then the exquisite story goes on :

" After this Cruimtheris went and set up at Cengoba, and Benen used to carry her ration to her every night from Patrick. And Patrick

planted an apple-tree in the field of the doe, which he had taken out of the fort to the north of Cengoba. Wherefore that field is called the Orchard of Patrick in Cengoba. The milk of that doe it is that used to be given to the dog that was near the virgin—namely, Cruimtheris.”<sup>2</sup>

Cruimtheris was not the only British Princess who came to dedicate her maidenhood to God under the direction of St. Patrick in Ireland. A lovely tale gathered up by Muirchu concerns a countrywoman of hers called Moneisen :<sup>3</sup>

“ Once upon a time, when all Britain was numb with the chill of unbelief, there was a noble daughter of a certain king, and her name was Moneisen ; and she was filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. When some one sought her in marriage, she did not consent ; and though bathed in tears, she could not be forced against her will to adopt what was the lower life. For she was wont—amidst blows and floods of tears—to ask her mother and her nurse to tell her Who was the Maker of the orb, by which the whole world is lighted up ; and she received an answer from which she ascertained that the Maker of the sun is He Whose seat is in heaven.

“ When she was constantly urged to join herself to a husband in the bond of matrimony, she used—illuminated by the brightest light of the Holy Spirit—to say, ‘ I will on no account do this thing.’ For she sought through nature the Maker of the whole creation ; following in this respect the example of the Patriarch Abraham.

<sup>2</sup> *Trip.*, I., 233.

<sup>3</sup> *Muirchu* I., 27.

" Her parents, inspired by God, heard of Patrick, and they sought the Scottic country with their daughter, and, with much toil, found him. And he began to question them ; whereupon they cried out saying : ' We have had to come to thee, compelled on account of our daughter who is earnestly desirous to see God.' Then he, filled with the Holy Ghost said to her : ' Dost thou believe in God ? ' She answered, ' I believe.' Then he washed her with the sacred laver of the Spirit and water. And almost immediately after falling on the ground, she yielded up her spirit into the hands of angels, and was buried where she died. Then Patrick prophesied that after twenty years her body would be reverently borne from that spot to a church hard by. And this afterwards came to pass ; the relics of this maiden from beyond the seas are venerated there to this day."

The royal maiden Cruimtheris is mentioned in the *Tripartite* as one of the three "embroideresses" of St. Patrick—the others being Lupait and Erc, or Ercnait, daughter of King Dáire, from whom our Apostle had obtained the grant of Ardd-Machae. Aubrey de Vere has painted a lovely picture of the three engaged in their gracious work of fashioning and adorning vestments and altar cloths for the celebration of the Great Sacrifice :—

" Beneath a pine three vestals sat close-veiled :  
A song these childless sang of Bethlehem's  
Child,

Low-toned, and worked their Altar-cloth, a  
Lamb

All white on golden blazon ; near it bled  
The bird that with her own blood feeds her  
young :

Red drops diffused her holy breast. These  
three

Were daughters of three kings."

The occupation assigned to Cruimtheris and her companions indicates one of the services rendered to the Church in Ireland by the missionary Sisters who accompanied St. Patrick. When a new "christianity," or Christian settlement, was established, one or two of these holy women would be assigned to it, to look after the sanctuary, keep its floor swept, weave and embroider its altar-cloths and vestments, keep its altar vessels shining and its altar linens spotless—and above all to instruct and prepare for Baptism and the Sacraments the girls and women of the place. At the great public Baptismal ceremonies (which a Canon assigned to St. Patrick makes us associate with Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany) they had a special rôle assigned them, when the women neophytes, after their triple immersion in the baptismal fountain, received from their hands the white robes of Baptism, which typified their regeneration to a new life.

Among the earliest of the Patrician holy women we read of Catnea who was assigned to the Mission at Ath-Bron, where her three brothers, Cathaceus, Cathurus and Catneus had their

station ; the virgin Bice, who looked after the church at Tech Laisrenn where St. Patrick "baptized the people of East Meath." Eiche, who performed a similar office for the church of Cell Glass, and her sister, Lalloc of Senlis. The two latter are said to have been sisters of Bishops Muinis, Mel of Ardagh and Rioc of Innisboffin, and nieces of St. Patrick himself. But none of these alleged relationships with our Apostle have much claim on our belief, as against his own statement that he had entirely cut himself off from home and kindred when he dedicated himself to the Mission in Ireland : "Did I come to Ireland without God, or according to the flesh. Who compelled me—I am bound in the spirit—not to see any one of my kinsfolk ?"<sup>4</sup>

How excellently these holy virgins and widows—heiresses of the spirit and work of the deaconesses of the primitive Church, sisters of the pious women who at that time were laying the foundations of monastic life for women in Gaul—did their work in Ireland is evidenced by the extraordinary number of Irish ladies who aspired to join them. Saint Patrick himself counts as the greatest of his missionary triumphs the multitude of religious vocations among the high born youths and maidens of Ireland : "Whence then in Ireland they who never had any knowledge of God, but until now only worshipped idols and abominations—how has there been lately made there a people of the Lord, and they are called children of God ? Sons of the Scots and

<sup>4</sup> *Epis.* 10.

daughters of chieftains are seen to become monks and virgins of God !

He makes special mention of one in particular —a lady of the ruling race whom he calls “ blessed,” and describes as of “ noble rank, most beautiful, grown up, whom I baptized. After a few days she came to us for a certain cause. She disclosed to us that she had received an answer by the good pleasure of God, and He warned her to become a virgin of Christ, and live closer to God. Thank God, six days after, most admirably and eagerly she seized on that which all virgins of God do in like manner, not with the consent of their parents, and nevertheless their number increases more and more, and we know not the number of our race who are there born again, in addition to widows and continent persons. . . But they who are kept in slavery suffer especially. They constantly endure even unto terror and threats. But the Lord gave grace to many of my handmaidens, for although they are forbidden they earnestly follow [the example set them].”<sup>5</sup>

So the lovely ceremonies which surround the “ Consecration of Virgins ” in the old Rituals became frequent on Irish soil, and they made a very deep impression on Irish imaginations. Especially is this true of the ceremony of the “ *Velatio* ”—the veiling of the virginal young head in token of the maiden’s espousals with Christ. Exquisitely poetical legends have come down to us associated with the *Velatio* of some of

<sup>5</sup> *Conf.* 41, 42.

our girl saints, such as Saint Attracta, and Saint Trea, for whom the looms of heaven itself were set at work to weave the veils for their mystic espousals. In the case of Saint Trea the angels settled the fashion of her wearing it. “The angels brought the veil from heaven and set it over her head, down over her eyes. And Patrick began to lift it up—‘Why,’ saith Trea, ‘is it not good that it should remain as it was placed.’ ‘Good indeed then,’ saith Patrick. During her life she saw nothing save what she beheld through that veil.”<sup>6</sup>

Some of these maidens had learned to put aside earthly love for the sake of the Divine Lover. From a story in the *Tripartite*, Aubrey de Vere has drawn his picture of :

“ King Daire’s daughter, Ercnait by name,”  
 who  
 “ Had loved Benignus in her Pagan years.  
 He knew it not : full sweet to her his voice.  
 Chaunting in choir. One day through grief  
 of love  
 The maiden lay as dead : Benignus shook  
 Dews from the font above her, and she woke  
 With heart emancipate that outsoared the  
 lark  
 Lost in blue heavens. She loved the Spouse  
 of Souls.”

But no breath of human passion, however innocent and pure, had touched the hearts of the

<sup>6</sup> *Tripartite* I., 169.

little Princesses, Ethne the Fair and Fedelm the Ruddy, " twin roses white and red " on the royal stem of Ireland's High Kings, whom Patrick baptized and consecrated to Christ by Clebach Well, near the kingly Rath of Cruachan. Radiant with dawn light, fresh and fragrant as the dewy forest glade in which it is set, comes their story to us in the pages of Tirechán and the *Tripartite*.

On a lovely summer morning the young Princesses (who had been sent away from the noise and clamour of the court of their father, King Laoghaire at Tara, to the seclusion of the ancestral royal seat at Cruachan, to be trained under the watchful eyes of the wisest druids in Ireland, Maol and Caplait, in the " six gifts of womanhood ") rose from their couches of silk and down, and hastened to perform their ablutions at the fountain of Clebach on the edge of the forest. While yet afar the sound of men's voices making strange music fell on their ears, and when they drew near a strange spectacle met their sight—a circle of grave-faced men were seated around the forest well, singing, while the morning sun shone on their tonsured heads and white garments.

The first thought of the maidens was that these were people of the *Sidhe*—from the faërie hill of Cruachan ; but it was Saint Patrick and his band of missionaries singing their matin hymns, praising the Lord in psalmody at the rising of the sun.

To the Princess Ethne's questionings Patrick

made answer, telling them not to put their faith in the *Sidhe*, but in the One True God Whose messenger he himself was. "Who is your God?" asked the Princess. "Where does He dwell? Is He in the skies or beneath them? In the mountains, or in the valleys, in the sea, or in rivers? Hath He sons beautiful in form and appearance? Doth He possess gold and silver, and doth His kingdom abound in wealth? By what sort of worship is He to be adored? Is He young or old? Are His years to fail after a period, or are they to be lasting?"

And these were the words of St. Patrick in reply :

"Our God is the God of all; the God of heaven and earth; the God of seas and rivers; the God of sun, moon and stars; the God of mountain heights and valley depths; God above the heavens, in heaven and under-heaven. Many mansions He has: heaven, earth, sea and all that these contain. From Him the sun, and moon, and stars, these luminaries of the world, have their light. On earth He created ranges of mountains, rivers and fountains with beautiful islands in the sea. Out of nothing He created all things visible and invisible. He sustains all, inspires all, vivifies all; He has a Son congenital with the Father, and neither is the Father prior to the Son, nor the Son later than the Father. Nor is the Holy Ghost separated from the Father and the Son, but He proceeds from the Father and the Son, co-eternal with and equal to both Persons. Yet the Father, the Son and the Holy

Ghost are not three Gods, but One God, true, holy and omnipotent. These three Persons are One and united . . . Wherefore as ye are daughters of an earthly king, it is meet and just that your thoughts and eyes should be drawn away from perishable things to those that are eternal ; from things lowly to those that are above ; and that your nuptials, chaste and indissoluble, should be sought with the Son of the King of Heaven, Whose duration hath no bounds, and Whose happiness hath no limit, rather than with the sons of earthly kings and their perishable fortunes.”

The words stirred in the hearts of the maidens a great longing to behold the face of the King’s Son. But Patrick told them they must first accept the Christian Creed and be baptized.

“ We believe,” they said, and thereupon, in the Fountain of Clebach, they were baptized.

Then the Princesses besought the Saint to show them, face to face, the Royal One to Whom alone they would plight their troth. He answered them : “ You must first receive devoutly the Flesh and Blood of your Spouse. Thus being quickened with the Food of Life you may pass from the impure world into the starry bride-chamber.”

Thus was it done ; and with the pure Body of Christ in their breasts, and the white veil of consecrated virgins on their heads, and the waters of Baptism still shining on their brows, the maidens went forth to meet their Bridegroom.

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“ Give us the Sacrifice ! Each bright head  
Bent towards it as sunflowers bend to the  
sun :  
They ate ; and the blood from the warm  
cheek fled :  
The exile was over : the home was won :  
A starry darkness o'erflowed their brain :  
Far waters beat on some heavenly shore :  
Like the dying away of a low, sweet strain,  
The young life ebbed, and they breathed no  
more :  
In death they smiled, as though on the  
breast  
Of the Mother Maid they had found their  
rest.

“ For they lay on one bed like Brides new wed,  
By Clebach Well ; and the dirge days over,  
On their smiling faces a veil was spread,  
And a green mound raised that bed to cover.  
Such were the ways of those ancient days—  
To Patrick for aye that grave was given ;  
And above it he built a church in their praise ;  
For in them had Eire been spoused to  
heaven.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Aubrey de Vere : *Legends of St. Patrick* : “ Saint Patrick and the Princesses.”

## *Chapter XVII.—The Saint and His Mission.*



NOTHER respect in which St. Patrick anticipated the most approved canons of the modern science of "Missiology" is by the paramount importance he ascribed to the foundation of a native clergy.

The exquisite story of St. Benen, or Benignus, enables us to understand how our Apostle gathered around him the band of splendid Irish boys who were to form a *corps d'élite* in his missionary troops—and shows another aspect of his character than that which is usually emphasised. He must have been a very kindly and "human" saint, with a wonderful power of appeal to youthful devotions and enthusiasms, this St. Patrick, who can take captive the hearts of little boys, at first sight, so that they will refuse to be parted from him, and exhaust their ingenuity to show their love and loyalty towards him.

It will be remembered that during the first Lent he spent in Ireland our Saint was the guest for a time of a certain chieftain, called Seschen, whose *dún* was situated on the banks of the little river Delvin, near Gormanstown. We have already learned, in an earlier chapter, of the extraordinary affection he then inspired in the

chieftain's son, a little boy called Benen. "All the odorous flowers which the lad could find he scattered over the breast of the [sleeping] cleric," says the *Tripartite*, and when Patrick's companions would have stopped him, fearful lest the tired Apostle's slumbers should be broken, St. Patrick himself testified his pleasure in the lovely boyish tribute and prophesied that Benen was to be his own successor.

That night the lad would sleep nowhere but at the Saint's feet, and the next day when Patrick was stepping into his chariot—with one foot on the ground and the other in the vehicle (as the vivid old narrative pictures him) young Benen clung so tightly to the foot that was on the ground, and cried so piteously to be allowed to go with "Patrick his father," that his own father according to the flesh, had no choice but to let him depart.

So young Benen had his part in all the great events that render memorable St. Patrick's first Easter in Ireland. He helped to kindle the Paschal fire on Slane; he walked, under the mighty protection of the *Lorica*, through the ambushed paths towards Tara; he submitted himself (the very incarnation of the loyalty of Ireland's boyhood to Ireland's Apostle !) to the ordeal of fire in the burning hut on the royal hill. Two delightful touches set off these episodes in the *Tripartite*. One is that when through the chanting of the *Fáed Fiada* to their ambushed enemies there appeared (instead of Patrick and his clerics) "eight deer going past them under

the mountain," Benen appeared as a "little fawn with a bundle on its shoulder." That was "Benen behind them with St. Patrick's book-satchel on his back"—the *Tripartite* explains.

The other charming touch is to be found in the *Tripartite*'s account of the ordeal by fire. Three little boys, kept at the High King's Court as hostages, come weeping to our Apostle before the "ordeal," heart-broken for this other little boy, Benen, who is not going to get anything like fair play in this awful test. "Then came to Patrick three little lads who were biding as hostages with Laoghaire. They weep to Patrick. Patrick asks : 'What is the matter?' 'A prince's troth,' say they, 'hath been broken in the chief city of the Gael :—viz., the hut that is being built [for the ordeal] is partly of wet timber and partly of dry—and the wet half is for the druid and the dry half for thy little gillie.'" That is a beautiful *trait* of boys' loyalty towards each other.

But perhaps the loveliest story we have about St. Patrick's relations with St. Benen is that related by Muirchu, which though its main purport is to show us the "heavens opening, and the Son of God Himself and His angels taking visible form" at the strong prayer of Patrick, shows too how "dear and *trusty*" to Patrick was one little Irish boy. Full of exquisite human tenderness, too, is that touch in it, which indicates the Saint's concern for his little apprentice saintling, and shows the ardours of his mystic prayer taking, in the lad's favour, the deadly chill from the penitential waters :—

"Once upon a time," writes Muirchu,<sup>1</sup> "when St. Patrick was going at night to a solitary place to pray, he gazed upon the familiar marvels of the heavens; and wishing to test his holy lad, who was most dear to him and trusty, he said: 'O my son, tell me I pray thee, if thou perceivest the things which I perceive.' Then the little boy, whose name was Benen, said without hesitation: 'I know now the things which thou perceivest; for I see the heavens opened, and the Son of God and His angels.' Then Patrick said: 'I perceive now thou art my worthy successor.'

"Immediately they reached with quickened step the accustomed place of prayer. These prayers were said in the middle of the bed of a river; and the little boy said 'I cannot endure the chill of the water.' For the water was too cold for him. Then Patrick told him to go down from the higher to a lower place [*i.e.*, from a place above himself to one further down stream]. There Benen was able to keep his place a long while, for he used to declare that he felt the water warm. Finally, not being able to stand longer in that place, he climbed on to the land."

Other little Irish boys whom St. Patrick recruited, at an early stage, for the sacred ministry were Mochaoi of Nendrum, and his uncle, Guasacht (grandson and son, respectively, of Miliucc); Sachellus, a young lad, who was his companion in the journey to Rome; Iarnaisc; Oengus; MacErca; Rodan; Cassan; another Benen, or Benignus, who has left his name to

<sup>1</sup> Muirchu I., 28.

Kilbannon ; and St. Olcan of Armoy. The last-named is said to have been sent by his patron to Gaul to make his studies, from which he returned to set up a famous school in Dalriada. But, as a general rule, St. Patrick seems to have trained his young recruits at Armagh, and a charming story in the *Tripartite* shows the interest of their kindly neighbours in them. “ Three curd cheeses and butter were brought to Patrick by a religious couple called Berach and Brig. ‘ This is for the little boys,’ said Brig.”

So these little boys had probably a very pleasant time in that ancient school of Armagh while they studied their *abgitoir* (“ elements ”) and their *Psalter*, and there is no doubt at all but that they dearly loved their master.

Seen through the eyes of these little boys, our Apostle reveals himself as a very different person from the hierarchic, imposing figure (always dressed in full “ Pontificals ”) made familiar by the artists—and a far more attractive and lovable.

He was, as the story of his youth must help us to realise, an “ open-air ” saint, with a wonderful knowledge of (amongst other things) the best places to fish (as the little boy fishers of the Drouse river knew),<sup>2</sup> and a wonderful love of, and understanding for animals. We remember how Dichu’s fierce dog came fawning to his feet ; how he saved the little fawn from the hunters, and carried it on his shoulders from Dáire’s field to the safety of the neighbouring wood ; how he cared for the rest and feeding of

<sup>2</sup> *Triþ.* I., 147.

the oxen which had drawn his chariot ; how he helped the poor driver whose horses had strayed to track them again.<sup>3</sup>

The tears of the unfortunate man, who had lost his team, combined with pity for the strayed horses themselves, doubtless, won our Saint's help on the occasion referred to ; for he could never look unmoved on the sorrows and sufferings of the "under-dog." His own days of bondage, and all their woes, came vividly before him the day he met by the great north road the unfortunate slaves of Trian. "Patrick saw that their hands were bleeding as they laboured to cut down a yew tree." He further learned that to make their "bondage and tribulation" greater they were forbidden to sharpen their tools against a whetstone, and so their hands were bleeding. His blessing having put the tools in fine condition our Saint proceeded to the Rath of Trian to plead for the chieftain's miserable bondsmen. But his pleadings were ignored—and a terrible retribution followed.<sup>4</sup>

It is his compassion for the wretched victims of the horrible slave system (under which he himself had suffered so intensely) that palpitates in every line of the *Epistle against Coroticus*, giving its breathless phrases an intensity of appeal rarely surpassed in great literature. That and his passionate love for his Irish people. "Therefore, in sadness and grief shall I cry aloud : O most lovely and beloved brethren and children whom I begot in Christ (I cannot reckon their

<sup>3</sup> Muirchu I., 26; II., 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Triþ.* I., 219.

number) what shall I do for you? I am not worthy to come to the aid of either God or man. The wickedness of the wicked hath prevailed against us. We are become, as it were, strangers. It is in their eyes a shameful thing to have been born in Ireland. Therefore, I grieve for you, I grieve, O ye most dear to me. But again I rejoice within myself. I have not laboured for nought, and my journey to a strange land was not in vain."

Full of compassion and sympathy for the poor and the suffering, our Apostle had other qualities which gave him a marvellous *prestige* among the upper classes, those proud *Scotti* who rated so high personal distinction, and a generous and free-handed attitude towards life. The story of King Dáire's cauldron illustrates some of these characteristics. *Grazacham*, the saint had said when the rich gift was made to him. *Grazacham*, again when it was taken from him. "His saying is so good," quoth Dáire, "that the cauldron must be brought back to him with his *grazacham*." "Thy cauldron must be left to thee," said the king, "for thou art a steady and imperturbable man."

This disinterestedness in his own regard was completed by a great generosity towards others. When "the Christian brethren, and the virgins of Christ and the religious women," moved by his preaching "would offer him gifts, and cast their ornaments on the altar," he always insisted on having them returned to them. He would accept no stipends for his ministry—"not even

the price of my shoe " ; and yet he was able to give rich gifts to princes, and to fee their sons who formed an armed escort for him on his missionary journeys, and to " retain " the judges in the districts which he most frequently visited.

This last detail throws light on one of the things that, humanly speaking, contributed most to the success of his mission : his thoroughly sympathetic attitude to native institutions. He learned the Irish language so thoroughly that he almost forgot—at least for epistolary purposes—the Latin of his school and cloister days,<sup>5</sup> that in all great moments of stress and emotion, his soul unburdened itself in Irish poetry. He made friends and converts among the Irish lawyers like Erc, and Irish *ollamhs* and poets like Dubhthach and his nephew, Fiacc, and, with their help, tried to bring native legislation into line with Christian ethics, in such a way that what was lawful in the former might be retained. He showed great respect for Irish social conventions, and Irish manners and customs, as far as they did not conflict with Christian principles ; and this, I think, helped him greatly when there was question of getting the princes and nobles to entrust their sons to him for a Christian education. For the story of young Conall, son of Prince Enda who was " fostered " by Bishop Cethiacus and his brother Mucneus, and remained in the secular state,<sup>6</sup> shows that our Apostle's plans comprised provisions for the education of boys other than those destined for the clergy.

<sup>5</sup> *Conf.*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Trip.* I., 139.

The necessary cultivation in the Patrician schools of Latin—the language of the Church—does not seem to have done any injury to the study of Irish. In fact it seems to have helped it. And while, in the next century, the Irish schools became famous for their classical culture there also makes itself manifest a strengthened *floraison* of Irish letters. It has been pointed out both by Dr. Eoin MacNeill and Dr. Bury that the earliest *Acta* of St. Patrick were written in Irish.

Our Apostle's extraordinary sympathy with, and respect for, native Irish culture and tradition is all the more to his credit, because it is not to be denied that to the end of his life he felt himself an exile in Ireland, “a stranger in a strange land.” True Roman provincial as he was, with the “townsman's” outlook on life so strikingly revealed in his *Epistle against Coroticus*, he looked on some of the places, whither his missionary journeyings took him—the western regions of Connacht, for instance—as the “ultimate places of the earth,” “the limits beyond which no man dwelleth,” and one might almost say is a little surprised (from a natural point of view) that he ever had the courage to venture so far! To the end of his life his heart turned fondly to the scenes of his boyhood's home, to his relatives in Britain, and to the Brethren in the Gallic monasteries, in whose company he had passed his apprenticeship in the ascetic life. Most willingly would he “proceed to Britain, as to his fatherland and relatives”—or to “Gaul to

visit the brethren and to see the face of the saints"; but a vow of stability for the Irish Mission (made, it would appear, on the direct command of Christ) kept him, for the sake "of the Gospel and His promises," captive "in the land, whence he had once before escaped from another captivity."

One ventures to think, however, that St. Patrick was more at home in Ireland than he himself quite realised—and that if the Lord had freed him from his vow of stability, and he had been at liberty to pass the last years of his life in Britain or in Gaul, the company of his relatives, "the faces of the Brethren and the Saints" would not have long silenced the same "voices" that, in the prime of his manhood, had called him back from all the dear delights of homeland and kindred, to his Irish people "to walk once more amongst them"

So far, we have been considering the natural qualities which made St. Patrick such a successful missioner, and before we conclude our survey of them it is well to remember that his success was all the more remarkable, because he had no great model from whom he could learn missionary methods. The newest examples he had to study were the missionary *tournées* in Gaul of St. Martin and St. Victoricus—and these were, after all, carried out under such a great difference of conditions from those prevailing in Ireland, that they cannot have been of much use to him. M. van Essen is quite right. St. Patrick had to be a pioneer among missioners—and when we

consider how marvellous a missionary machine he perfected, single-handed so to speak, and how triumphantly he anticipated—by fifteen centuries—the most highly approved discoveries of modern “missiology,” we cry out in startled admiration at the greatness of his character and his genius—his greatness as a man.

Say rather his greatness as a Saint. For it was because St. Patrick was a great Saint that he was a great missioner; and it was because God had chosen him to lead “Virgin Eire” to the light of His Countenance, that the ways were made so clear to him by which he was to guide her, and the apostolic gift of miracles was put by the Almighty in his hands to make those roads straight. All his science was comprised in one science—the science of the Saints. On the desolate slopes of an Irish hill the great Master had come to the young herdsboy of Miliucc, and initiated him into the loftiest secrets of mystic prayer. Henceforth his life was one long prayer. His nights were vocal with the “groanings of the Spirit praying mightily within him,” even while his body rested in sleep. The wintry dawn came too tardily for the ardent need of God which had wakened the sleeping boy “to prayer in snow and frost and rain.” He prayed along every inch of the road which led to the port of his escape; he had prayer for his guide and security through the perils of the ocean, the privations of the desert, the vicissitudes of the long journeying through “Gaul and Italy and in the islands of the Tyrrhenian Sea.” In prayer was his Mission

revealed to him, in prayer were his ears attuned to hear, over the dividing leagues of sea and land, the pleading " voices of the Irish," the cries of those who dwelt beside the Wood of Fochlut anigh the Western Sea " that he might " come again and walk once more amongst them."

The prayer of St. Patrick ! It has mapped as with a luminous pencil the roads of Ireland, along which our Apostle walked in his missionary journeys through the length and breadth of our land. It has kindled an undying beacon blaze on each " fair hill of holy Eire." But on three of these hills in especial, it burns with a clear shining light in whose mystic flame we, the children of St. Patrick, might well come to-day to rekindle our own smouldering torches.

These three are : Slemish, Croagh Patrick and Tara. And it will not have escaped the notice of those who are learned in the science of the spiritual life that each of these represents, as it were, " a station " along the mystic way which is the highway of the Saints.

The ascent of Slemish is the illuminative way. There amid the solitude of the woods, and in the silence of the lonely hills the Divine Lover had revealed Himself to Patrick, and claimed for Himself for ever all the passionate devotion, the unswerving loyalty of that faithful heart : " The love of God and the fear of Him increased more and more, and faith waxed strong and the spirit was roused, so that I prayed a hundred times in a single day and at night as frequently, biding [to that end] in the woods and on the mountains.

Before daybreak I used to be awakened to prayer in snow, and frost, and rain, and felt no hurt, nor was there any weariness in me, because the Spirit was fervent within me."

To the heights of Croagh Patrick there led, on the other hand, the " way of purgation." There our Apostle abode " in much displeasure, without food, without drink, from Shrove Saturday until Easter Saturday." Terrible the assaults of the powers of darkness he had to sustain there, where countless hosts of demons in the form of black birds gathering about the lonely figure on the Rick darkened the very noonday sky above him. He made for himself a panoply of the Psalms ; he rang his blessed bell against the foe so that the " men of All Ireland heard its voice " from that high lifted mountain cone. But still " they left him not because of either." " Then Patrick wept till his face and his chasuble were wet " ; and the tears of our Saint banished the demons from the land of Eire " till the end of seven years, and seven months, and seven days and seven nights " ; and where the sky had been darkened by the foul black demon birds, there was now a flashing of white wings, and a harping of melodious melodies while the " hosts of the Saints of Eire " yet to be born were revealed by the Divine Comforter, to Patrick their father.

But those who will follow St. Patrick the while he climbs the grassy slopes of Tara will be privileged to follow in the footsteps that mark the " Way of Union." Has he not delivered the secret of that ascent to us himself in the Hymn

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which gives the very keynote of all his life and strivings :

“ Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ within me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ at my right hand, Christ at my left,  
Christ in the fort,  
Christ in the chariot-seat,  
Christ in the poop.

Christ in the heart of every man who thinks  
of me,  
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks  
to me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

Amen.”

## APPENDICES

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### I.—ADDITIONAL NOTE TO CHAPTERS I. AND III.

#### *Silva Focluti or Silva Virgulti?*

SINCE this book was written it has occurred to me that the solution of some of the puzzling questions raised in Chapters I. and III. may have been lying all the time nearer to our hand than any Patrician investigator has yet suspected. One of these puzzles is to explain why St. Patrick, if his objective was Sliabh Mis, should have chosen to land in an indent of Strangford Lough, rather than in some more convenient port. The other is the location of the mysterious *silva* whence came the "voices" that called him back to Ireland.

In all existing MSS. of the *Confession*, except that in the *Book of Armagh*, instead of the reading *silvam focluti* we find the reading, *silvam virgulti*. I suggest that this reading (which has the support of five MSS. of widely varying *provenance* out of a total of six) may, after all, be the correct reading, and that the *Caill Cleithe* (Wattle Wood), of which it is an exact Latin rendering, may have been that whose memory survives in the place-name Kilclief, the designation of a parish and town, about two miles south of Strangford, and right on the *Fretum Brene*, the narrow entrance to Strangford Lough.

If this reading be accepted, it would explain at once why St. Patrick chose the districts around Strangford Lough as the scene of his earliest missionary activities, for it would have been from

these very places that the " voices " of old friends had called to him beseeching him " to walk once more amongst them."

That he was returning to a district he knew very well is proved, amongst other things, by the ease with which he negotiated *Fretum Brene*. The strength of such argument may only appeal to those familiar with the channel. For my other readers I quote from Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*: "Strangford Lough is a safe and deep harbour admitting vessels of the largest draught, but owing to the great rapidity of the tides and the rocks near its entrance, on which the sea breaks violently, it is not prudent for a strange vessel to attempt to enter. There are two passages to it, divided by a reef nearly in the centre of the channel, and half a mile long, called Rock Angus, corrupted into the 'Rock and Goose.' . . . The passage on the south side of Rock Angus has only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms of water, and is navigable only for small vessels. The tide runs in and out of the lough with such velocity as on some occasions to carry vessels against the wind."

I have already pointed out in my text that there was some intimate connection between the family of St. Patrick's old master, Miliucc Maccu Buain and the people of Mag Inis; and Mochaoi of Nendrum, the son of Bronach, daughter of Miliucc, whom St. Patrick found (according to the *Tripartite*) between Saul and Bright is the key-name to this connection. Curiously enough, he is called "Mochaoi of Cell-Cleithe" in various texts quoted in *Onomasticon Goedelicum* (*Book of Lecan*, *Book of Leinster*, *B. of Ballymote*, *Annals of Innisfallen*).

Here the first objection to the thesis I am trying to establish meets us. The MS. readings of the place-name from which Kilclief derives, give "Cell Cleithe," instead of "Caill-Cleithe." That there was a "wattle-wood" there before there was a "wattle church" is, however, demonstrable. One proof is that two brothers of Dichu of Saul are called Eoghan and Niall of Kilclief. There can

have been no "cell" (or church) in their time to give the place its name—and it must, therefore, have been originally *caill-cleithe*.

That there was a "wattle-wood"—and a pretty large one—in the neighbourhood is further proved, very appositely, by the story of St. Mochaoi himself. He "went with *seven score* young men to cut wattles to make a church." There the angel "in the form of a bright bird, singing on the blackthorn near him" entertained him with heavenly melodies so ravishing that three hundred years seemed but a few hours: "three hundred years did Mochaoi remain listening to him, leaving his bundle of sticks by his side *in the middle of the wood*."

A further objection to my thesis is that the *Silva* from beside which the "voices" reached St. Patrick's ears was beside the "Western Sea"—"Mare Occidentale." It seems more natural for us to make this describe the Atlantic Ocean. But that it was applied to the sea between Ireland and Britain is proved by Probus. (*Trias Thaumaturga*, 51.) Speaking of St. Patrick's birthplace (and evidently having Muirchu's *Vita* before him) he tells us the saint was born "haud procul a mari occidentali." Muirchu uses the words "mari nostro," in the same connection, and both mean clearly what we now call the "Irish Sea."

But the greatest objection of all to the adoption of the reading "Silvam virgulti" instead of *Silvam Focluti* is that the latter is found in the *Book of Armagh* text of the *Confession*. Now though this is only one authority against five, still its *prestige* is so much greater ("having been transcribed at least 250 years earlier than any of the other MSS.") that to reject its reading requires no little courage. How great we may estimate from this circumstance: the famous Bollandist, Father Andreas Denis, S.J., when editing for the *Acta Sanctorum* the St. Vaast *MS.* of the *Confession*, actually amended the *silvam virgulti* of his own *MS.* into the *Silvam Focluti*

which he found in Ussher's edition of the *Confession* based on the *Book of Armagh* text.

However, the scribe of the *Book of Armagh* has been proved by Dr. Gwynn to have been—if not actually careless—at least in a great hurry. He scamped his work pretty recklessly—leaving out entire passages so that the most Dr. White can say for him is that he has given us “considerably more than half the *Confession*. ” This carelessness detracts from his authority.

Nevertheless, that he found the place-name *Focluti* in the MS. from which he copied is pretty certain; and that both Muirchu and Tirechán had it before them is proved by the story Tirechán bases on it (*Book of Armagh*, p. 20), and by Muirchu's paraphrase of the words of the *Confession* “ibique dictum est in visione: vocant te filii et filiae silvae foclitae” (*ib.* p. 3).

Curiously enough there is an echo of *cleithe* in the *foclitae* of Muirchu.

Muirchu and Tirechán, however, though they take us back to before 700, cannot give us the last word on this matter. Nor can Muirchu's authority, Aedh of Sleibte (to whom Dr. Eoin MacNeill ascribes the Hymn *Genair Patraicc*), though he takes us back to the middle of the seventh century. There are two whole centuries between this date and the date of the autograph of the *Confession*—a period sufficiently long to allow MS. corruptions to develop.

To sum up: the reading *Silva Virgulti*, though the MS. authority for it is so much later than that for the *Silva Focluti* of the *Book of Armagh*, has five MSS. in its favour, and if it be adopted, and accepted as a rendering of a place-name still surviving in Kilclief, it would make the whole story of St. Patrick's Mission fall into ordered and intelligible sequence. It must always have been a puzzle to those who recognise with what fidelity St. Patrick followed his “voices” to find him waiting to overhear a chance conversation on Tara to set about discovering the place whence they came to him. It has also been

a puzzle to know why he should have landed in Strangford Lough to set out to visit Slemish. If his " voices " came from " a wattle wood " on the shores of Lough Cuan, and were those of old friends of his youth, among whom he had already exercised the apostolate of a holy boy's example, everything would become perfectly clear. Diclu and his brothers might easily have been these old friends; and St. Patrick, who was, like most great mystics, a man of great practical ability and common sense, would be acting quite in keeping with all we know of his character and missionary methods, in starting operations in their territory.

That the reading *Focluti* gave even Tirechán trouble is proved by the story he finds it necessary to tell in connection with it to explain St. Patrick's journey with Prince Enda to Connacht. This story undergoes a curious transformation in the *Tripartite*, where Conall, the son of Enda, is made to refer to the dream-call of St. Patrick in a very round about way (*Tripartite* I., 129). In Muirchu, too, the incident as related in the *Confession* has become much altered. These facts prove conclusively that even before the time of Tirechán and Muirchu (the middle of the seventh century) there was serious corruption, or mis-reading of the text of the *Confession* they followed.

A *fortiori* we are forbidden to claim for the text of the *Confession* in the *Book of Armagh* (beginning of the ninth century) such accuracy, that the reading *Focluti* for which it is our sole authority, imposes itself absolutely as against the reading *virgulti* of the other five surviving MSS. of the *Confession*—especially since the latter, if interpreted as describing a " wattle wood " situated on the entrance to Strangford Lough, and perpetuated as a place-name in Kilclief, would, as we have said, make St. Patrick's whole story fall into luminous and intelligible sequence. The passage would thus run in a literal translation: " And then indeed I saw in the night visions a man whose name was

Victoricus, coming, as it were, from Ireland with letters innumerable, And he gave me one of them, and I read the beginning of the letter, which was entitled 'the Voice of the Irish,' and while I was reading aloud the beginning of the letter I thought that at that very moment I heard the voice of them who lived beside the wattle wood [*i.e.*, Kilclief] which is nigh unto the Western Sea [*i.e.*, Irish Channel]. And thus they cried, as with one mouth, ' We beseech thee, holy youth, to come and walk once more amongst us.'

To my mind the very lateness of the MSS. which contain the reading " *silvam virgulti* " rather strengthens the argument in favour of the correctness of this reading. They were all copied centuries after the " *silvam Focluti* " of the Armagh text had not only *fait école*, so to speak, but had produced a whole *floraison* of legends concerning those whose " voices " had called from the wood. This seems to make unlikely the suggestion that " *virgulti* " is an emendation of an irrecongnisable place-name.

It would be curious, too, if five copyists made the same emendation, or came upon it in their MSS—for the five copies of the *Confession* which have the reading *virgulti* are so different from each other that we cannot assume an immediate common source. Thus the St. Vaast MS., used by Father Andreas Denis, S.J. for his edition in the *Bollandists' Collection* had the reading *Silvam virgulti* (which he acknowledges he changed to *Silvam Focluti* in the printed text); the Cottonian MS. (now in the British Museum) and one of the Fell MSS. (now in the Bodleian, Oxford) have *virgulti volutique* (the latter word being underdotted in the Fell MS.); the other Fell MS. has *virgultique*; the Rouen MS. has *virgulti veluti*.

How then did *Focluti* arise? I think Dr. Eoin MacNeill's study of the question suggests a possible answer. The scribe who was primarily responsible for it meant to write *virgulti voluti* (*i.e.*, " twisted wattle," as in the Cottonian and Fell MSS.), but left

out *virgulti*—the next copyist finding *voluti* where a place-name might be expected wrote *vocluti*—which a later copyist, knowing of St. Patrick's connection with "Fochloth," near Killala, made *Focluti*, a reading later consecrated by Tirechán (a native of the surrounding district) and by Muirchu, and Muirchu's patron, Bishop Aedh of Sletty.

## II.—LANDING PLACE OF ST. PATRICK.

THE account given in Chapter I. of St. Patrick's first missionary conquests in Mag Inis is based on Muirchu I., 11, and *Vita Tripartita* I., p. 39. Tirechán (who has omitted all references to our Apostle's labours in the "Island Plain") makes him first active in Bregia, and the *Tripartite* follows Tirechán in this, placing the Mag Inis missionary campaign after the Bregian.

Muirchu describes St. Patrick's sea journey from Inver Dé to Loch Cuan so exactly that Dr. Gwynn considers he must have made it himself. Muirchu writes of the Saint as having sailed up-coast, touching at the island (called after him Inis-Patrick) and then keeping Bregia and the territory of Conaille Muirtheimni and Southern Ulaid (*i.e.*, Meath, Louth and South Down) on the left, entering the *fretum* which is called Brene, and coming to land at *Ostium Slain*. The *fretum Brene* (called in some of the other *Vitae*, *fretum Brenasse*) was the ancient name applied to the narrow entrance to Loch Cuan, now Strangford Lough. It had been identified by Dr. O'Donovan in his edition of the *Four Masters*, and had preserved the name Brene, as late as 1306, embedded in the place-name "Balibren" (now Ballintogher), which we find in the *Taxation of Pope Nicholas*.

We owe the identification of the *Ostium Slain* to the late Mr. J. W. Hanna, of Downpatrick, who embodied the results of his research in a valuable

paper entitled, "An Inquiry into the true landing-place of St. Patrick in Ulidia." One day Mr. Hanna had a conversation with an old woman of the neighbourhood concerning the adventures of a United Irishman called Coulter. Describing how he was pursued, she said, "he forded the Slaney at Ringban." Then Mr. Hanna discovered that the Slaney was the old name of the river which rises in Loughmoney, and flows into Strangford Lough at Ringban, about two miles from Saul, dividing the townlands of Ringban and Ballintogher ("Balibren").

### III.—BURIAL PLACE OF ST. PATRICK.

IT appears from Muirchu's account (reproduced in Chapter XV. of this book) that though St. Patrick died at Saul he was buried in Dundalethglaisse. A little before Muirchu wrote his *Life of St. Patrick* a church was built over the remains at the latter place, and he tells how the workmen engaged on it, coming upon the relics of the Saint were terrified by flames that issued from the grave.

In the "bad times" of the Danish invasions, the "Wars of the Gael with the Gall," the relics of St. Columba are said to have been borne to Downpatrick and those of St. Brigid from Kildare, and the bodies of the three "Wonder-Working Saints of Eire" laid in a common grave in the old Abbey Church or Cathedral of Downpatrick.

In the course of time the location of this venerable tomb was forgotten until it was discovered in 1185 by Bishop Malachy III of Down in circumstances minutely recorded in an account embodied by the late Rev. J. O'Laverty in his *Historical Account of the Dioceses of Down and Connor* (I. "Parish of Down")<sup>1</sup>:

"It being well known that the three bodies were

<sup>1</sup> This account is taken from "Lessons from the Feast of the Translation of SS. Patrick, Brigid and Columba," published in Messingham's *Florilegium*.

in Down, the Bishop, Malachy III used to pray fervently to God that He would vouchsafe to point out to him the particular place where they were concealed. On a certain night when praying in the Cathedral Church he saw a light like a sunbeam traversing the church which stopped at a certain point. Immediately procuring the necessary implements he dug in that spot, and found the three bodies which he then put into three boxes, and placed them again underground. Having communicated his discovery to John de Courcy, then Lord of Down, messengers were sent by the latter to Pope Urban III, for the purpose of procuring the solemn translation of these relics to a more dignified part of the church. The Pope, having agreed to their request, sent as his legate in the following year (1186) Cardinal Vivian, who had been in Downpatrick nine years earlier. On his arrival the relics were solemnly translated to a more honourable part of the church, on the 9th June, feast of St. Columba. They were deposited in one tomb, according to the well known distich given in the Office of the Translation :—

“ Nunc tres in Duno tumulo tumulantur in uno  
Brigida, Patricius, atque Columba pius.”

“ In Down three saints one grave do fill,  
Patrick, Brigid, and Columkille.”

“ Besides the Cardinal Legate there were present at this translation fifteen bishops, together with abbots, deans, archdeacons, priors and an innumerable concourse of the inferior clergy and laity.”

Until the iconoclastic minions of Henry VIII destroyed the Shrine of the “ Three Wonder-workers,” and burned the church and abbey of Down (A.D. 1539), it was a favourite place of pilgrimage. One famous pilgrim came there in 1517, in the person of the Papal Nuncio, Monsignor Chiericati. In a letter to Isabella d’Este, Marchioness of Mantua, his Excellency relates how he “ rounded

off " his pilgrimage to Lough Derg, by " a station of three days " at Down, where he found the Bishop, a countryman of his own, a native of Viterbo, who in the healthy Irish air had reached the patriarchal age of 114.<sup>2</sup> " His church contains the bodies of SS. Patrick, Brigid and Columba."

Though the abbey and church were burned and their shrines destroyed, the relics of the three saints were saved, it appears, and enshrined anew under the altar in the ruined sanctuary. According to the recollections of a man called John Millar (born about 1750) when the ruined Cathedral was being renovated three stone coffins were found under the high altar. As these were believed to contain the relics of Saints Patrick, Brigid and Columcille they were, John Millar stated, removed to that grave in the ancient cemetery attached to the Abbey, called " St. Patrick's Grave." Formerly there stood over this grave an ancient granite cross " which some wicked bigots, in 1842, carried off and threw over a precipice to the cries of ' No St. Patrick.' The ancient cross was carried back, but having again been carried off and broken, it was for many years locked up in a portion of the Cathedral." (See O'Laverty's *Down and Connor*, Vol. I. " Parish of Down." )

On the occasion of the translation of the relics of the " Three Wonder-Working Saints of Ireland " in 1186, some of these relics were brought by Cardinal Vivian to Rome. But at least two remarkable relics said to be of St. Patrick were preserved in Ireland. One was that of " St. Patrick's Hand," the reliquary of which is treasured in the Diocesan Museum of Down and Connor, the other is that of " St. Patrick's Jaw Bone," which was also procured for the same Diocese by Most Rev. Dr. Dorrien. The history of both is most interesting—and will be found in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*. Vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> This was probably Bishop Tiberius, who repaired the Cathedral or Abbey Church in 1512.

## IV.—THE CHRONOLOGY OF ST. PATRICK.

To reconstruct the chronological framework of St. Patrick's life is a matter of much difficulty. The only date we can be certain of is that of his arrival in Ireland as a missionary: A.D. 432. For 461 as the date of his death we have the *Annals of Ulster* supporting the evidence of Tirechán: "a passione Christi . . . anni ccccxxxiii." (Dr. Bury has shown that Tirechán's date for the Passion was A.D. 29). All other dates have to be tentatively deduced or inferred.

We know from his own *Confession* that St. Patrick was about sixteen years of age when he was carried off to slavery, and that he spent at least six years in captivity (*Conf.* i and 17). The *Vita Tertia* and Probus (*Trias Thau.*, pp. 22, 48), give four years as the period of his stay in the monastery of St. Martin of Tours, and Probus (*ibi.*) assigns eight years to our Saint's sojourn with the "bare-footed hermits," the island monks of Lérins. The *Vita Tertia* is again our authority for reckoning as four years the period spent by him with St. Germanus of Auxerre. From these *data* we arrive at the following tentative Chronology:

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Birth of St. Patrick                            | A.D. 389 |
| Taken captive                                   | 405      |
| Escape from captivity                           | 411—412  |
| Sojourn in Tours                                | 412—416  |
| At home in Britain                              | 416—418  |
| Sojourn in Lérins ...                           | 418—426  |
| With St. Honoratus in Arles                     | 426—428  |
| Council of Arles                                | 428      |
| Mission of SS. Germanus and<br>Lupus to Britain | 429      |
| St. Patrick at Auxerre                          | 430—432  |
| Mission of Palladius ... ...                    | 431      |
| Arrival of St. Patrick in Ireland               | 432      |

The years from 428 to 432 spent by St. Patrick near St. Germanus would correspond to the "four years" of the *Vita Tertia*.

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| First Easter of St. Patrick at Slane<br>and Tara ... ... ...                          | 433               |
| Missionary activities in Meath, the<br>two Teffias, Connacht, and<br>Ulster ... ...   | 433—439           |
| Arrival of Secundinus, Auxilius<br>and Isserninus ...                                 | 439 (An. U.)      |
| St. Patrick spends Lent on Croagh<br>Patrick ... ...                                  | 440               |
| Journey to Rome—"Approved"<br>by Pope Leo "in the Catholic<br>Faith" ... ...          | 441—443 (An. U.)  |
| Foundation of Armagh  | 444 (An. U.)      |
| Death of Secundinus ...   | 447 (An. U.)      |
| Missionary Activities of St.<br>Patrick, now Metropolitan, in<br>Leinster and Munster | 450—457           |
| St. Patrick retires to Saul   | ... 457 (An. U.)* |
| Episcopacy of St. Benen   | 457—467           |
| Death of Auxilius ...   | 459 (An. U.)      |
| Death of St. Patrick at Saul  | 461 (An. U.)      |
| Death of St. Benignus, successor<br>of St. Patrick ...                                | 467 (An. U.)      |
| Death of Bishop Isserninus  | 468 (An. U.)      |

\* "Repose of Sen Patraic."

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